



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

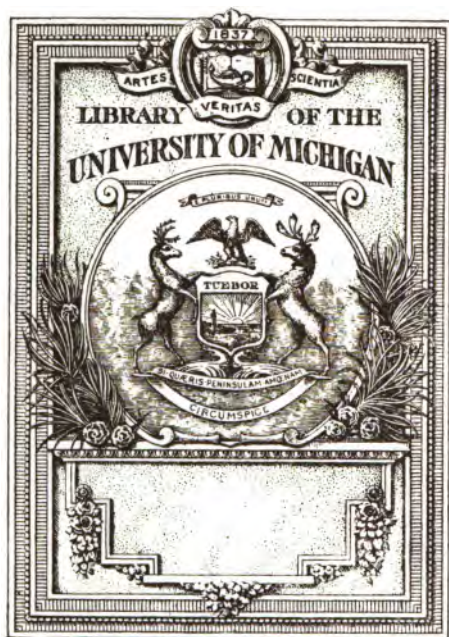
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

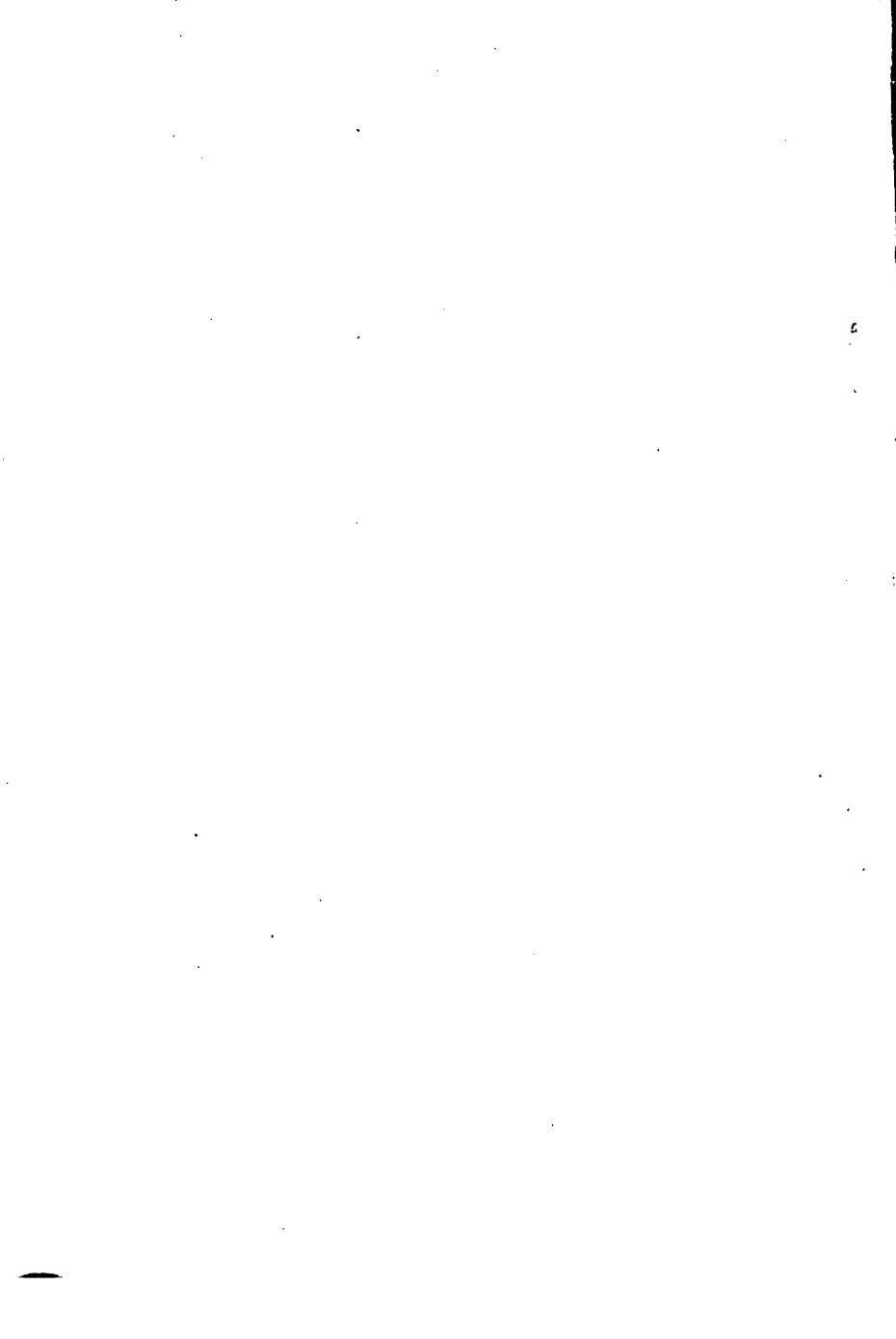


0.

15

823

W71



**HOW TO STUDY  
"THE BEST SHORT STORIES"**



# How to Study "The Best Short Stories"

AN ANALYSIS OF EDWARD J. O'BRIEN'S ANNUAL VOLUMES OF THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF THE YEAR  
PREPARED FOR THE USE OF WRITERS AND OTHER  
STUDENTS OF THE SHORT-STORY

BY



BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS

Associate Professor of English, Hunter College of the City  
of New York; Instructor in Short-Story Writing,  
Columbia University (Extension Teaching and  
Summer Session). Author of "Gnomic  
Poetry in Anglo-Saxon," "A Hand-  
book on Story Writing," etc.;  
Editor of "A Book of  
Short Stories."



BOSTON  
SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS



Copyright, 1919

By **SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY**  
(INCORPORATED)



08-28-1927

## PREFACE

In this foreword, I wish first of all to thank Captain Achmed Abdullah, Gertrude Atherton, Edwina Stanton Babcock, Barry Benefield, Thomas Beer, Katharine Holland Brown, Maxwell Struthers Burt, Francis Buzzell, Donn Byrne of Oriel, Charles Caldwell Dobie, Theodore Dreiser, George Gilbert, Susan Glaspell, Armistead C. Gordon, Fannie Hurst, Arthur Johnson, Fanny Kemble Johnson, Burton Kline, Mary Lerner, Sinclair Lewis, Jeannette Marks, Walter J. Muilenburg, Seumas O'Brien, Vincent O'Sullivan, Albert DuVerney Pentz, Lawrence Perry, Mary Brecht Pulver, Harrison Rhodes, Benjamin Rosenblatt, Fleta Campbell Springer, and Julian Street. Each of these authors very kindly gave data which no one could have gleaned; and in so doing they have contributed largely to the usefulness of this study.<sup>1</sup>

Only the other day a student demanded, "Why can't I get an author to tell me every step in the development of one of his stories?" Although, as I tried to point out, such a thorough proceeding is neither desirable nor easily possible,<sup>2</sup> yet the essentially valuable part of the author's progress may be most illuminative, and it is obtainable. As one of these writers has said, the artist is not analytical beforehand and is not so, of necessity, after completing his work. But even from those who progress only, as they assert, by inspiration come clear and helpful statements concerning their starting

<sup>1</sup> I must add to this list a former student, Pearl Doles Bell, who interviewed Mrs. Irvin Cobb and who read her notes to my summer class of 1916. (The interview was published, subsequently, in *The* [New York] *Sun*, October 1, 1916.) My assistant, Miss Shirley V. Long, collaborated in the analysis of Miss Hurst's "Get Ready the Wreaths."

<sup>2</sup> Poe seems to be the sole writer who has asserted that he could call to mind the progressive steps of any of his compositions.

points and developing processes. This generosity of successful writers augurs well for the future of fiction.

Charles Caldwell Dobie has said:<sup>1</sup> "Any man who has made a success of his business or profession always seems to consider it his duty to warn others off the field. The advice of both failure and success appears to be embodied in one and the same word, 'Don't!' This is a curious paradox, and I shall not attempt to explain it. Perhaps it is because the roads to success or to failure are hard to distinguish, the sign-posts at the parting of the ways almost undecipherable. Yes, I think it must be this realization of the nearness of defeat that makes the successful one so anxious to dissuade others from the struggle. And yet, after all, there is a bit of egotism back of the kindly advice we offer, rather patronizingly, to our friends.

"I would be the last person to warn the ambitious from literary endeavor, providing they would rather write than do anything else in the world; providing, also, they were equipped with three qualifications. Determination is the first; a hide at once sensitive and impervious ranks second; an hour—at least—a day to devote to the pursuit of their purpose. I say *devote* advisedly; the true lover is never niggardly. . . . If added to these virtues, one has a quiet room and no telephone, half the battle is won."<sup>2</sup>

And, further, by way of emphasis on work and study, hear Burton Kline: "As an editor I have a feeling that some of the writers who should be railroad presidents or bank directors are getting in the way of real writers that I ought to be discovering. In the long run it is probably better to have all the writing we can get. The wider the net is spread, the greater the chance of something precious in the haul. The teaching of writing, even if it finds only a few real writers, helps to sharpen

<sup>1</sup> *The Silhouette*, February, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen Glasgow writes behind locked doors; Gertrude Atherton "rings down an iron curtain" between herself and the world.

the critical taste of the others and whet their appetite for better writing. And I believe that sharper appetite and more discriminating taste is beginning to be felt. . . . In the creation of a literature, an audience is as necessary as the performers themselves. And the more critical the audience, the more likely we are to have great performers. The opportunity invites and develops them. . . ."

Speaking from the critic's and teacher's point of view, I not only believe that one can "learn to write"; I know, because more than once I have watched growth and tended effort from failure to success. Many would-be writers drop by the way; the telephone to pleasure is too insistent, or the creative process is not sufficiently joyful. Some students, however, need only an encouraging word and sympathetic criticism. Harriet Welles is an example of this sort. Her stories have been running in *Scribner's* for some months; she worked only a year in my class at Columbia before producing finished narratives. Others must labor and exercise patience in order to accomplish a few — perhaps one or two — worthy specimens of the story-teller's art. I refer, for illustration, to another student, Elizabeth Stead Taber, whose "Scar" attracted favorable comment and drew from Mr. O'Brien high praise in his volume of 1917. Others write prolifically, turning out story after story, before attaining the highest publications and prices — but not of necessity before attaining excellent construction and style. Marjorie Lewis Prentiss comes to mind as an earnest and careful writer of this sort, who is improving as steadily as she writes and publishes regularly. I need not refer to Frederick S. Greene — now in France — who has become well known through his stories, and who felt that he worked best under class criticism. He studied as he wrote, and his published stories, with only two exceptions as I recall, were produced, first, for the class-room audience. Even those who succeed only once, or who never succeed, have learned to evaluate the content and the manner of the printed narrative, and

have added to the body of the intelligent fiction-public.

The *great artist*, let me add, hews his own way. But—! Gutzon Borglum once said that in his opinion there had lived only three great masters of art: Phidias, Michel Angelo, and Auguste Rodin. If these are the great names in sculpture and pictorial art, who are those in the world of fiction writing?

. . . I use the form "short-story" to indicate the particular *genre* or type, to distinguish it from the story that is merely short. I have laid down my definition in "A Handbook on Story Writing,"<sup>1</sup> a volume which the student of this book should have at hand. In the space here allowed, there can be no discussion of terminology. Mr. O'Brien has expressed himself as uninterested in technical distinctions, a fact which argues for the greater range of his choice. He has preferred the larger values, and therefore no adverse comment is implied in my classing a story in these collections as a novelette or another as a story that is merely short.<sup>2</sup> From the standpoint of literature, an advantage lies in the more extended field. And at best, opinions differ. I can only set down my own reactions, backed by eight years of teaching and a life-time interest in fiction.

To the student, I would emphasize the fact that studying these "Yearbook" stories, valuable as such study may become, will not make of you a writer; but from them, this little book, and the wealth of detail which Mr. O'Brien has accumulated, you can apprehend the elements of technique and learn, at the same time, what is successful from an editorial point of view. For every short-story writer must be both an artist and a man of business. If his work is not published, it is not. Much of it, early in the exercising stages, should die. But at the last there must be evidence of labor and of genius. Only one evidence is admissible: the product.

<sup>1</sup> Dodd Mead & Company, 1917. Third Edition, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> In quoting, I have used "short story" or "short-story" as written by the various authors. It will be seen that the forms are usually interchangeable.

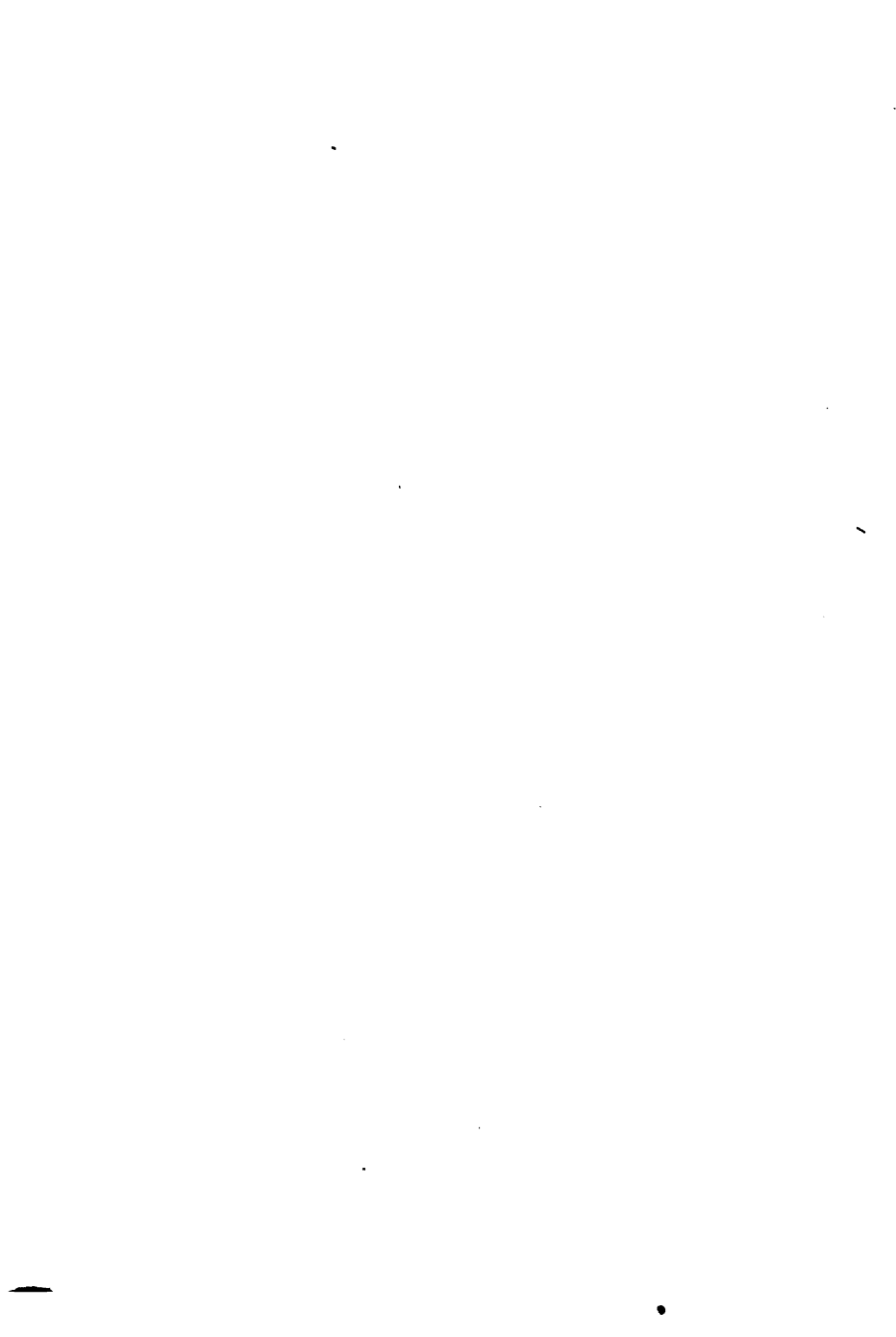
## PREFACE

ix

While you are learning, then, do not try to publish. "Do" your exercises, and practise much; master the principles, and express yourself. When you have become full-grown, put away childish things, and forget that you ever heard of technique.

BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS.

New York City,  
November 30, 1918.



# CONTENTS

## STORIES IN THE YEARBOOKS

1915, 1916, 1917, and 1918.

PAGE

— A SIMPLE ACT OF PIETY. By Captain Achmed Abdullah . . . . .	1918	1
— THE SACRIFICIAL ALTAR. By Gertrude Atherton	1916	8
— THE EXCURSION. } By Edwina Stanton Babcock {	1917	12
CRUELITIES. }	1918	14
ONNIE. By Thomas Beer . . . . .	1917	18
MISS WILLETT. By Barry Benefield . . . . .	1916	21
SUPERS. By Frederick Booth . . . . .	1916	23
BUSTER. By Katharine Holland Brown . . . . .	1918	24
FOG. By Dana Burnet . . . . .	1916	28
THE WATER-HOLE. } By Maxwell Struthers Burt {	1915	31
A CUP OF TEA. }	1917	33
? — MA'S PRETTIES. } By Francis Buzzell { . . . . .	1916	37
LONELY PLACES. }	1917	39
THE WAKE. By Donn Byrne . . . . .	1915	42
THE GREAT AUK. } By Irvin Cobb { . . . . .	1916	44
BOYS WILL BE BOYS. }	1917	48
CHAUTONVILLE. By Will Levington Comfort . . . . .	1915	51
LAUGHTER. } By Charles Caldwell Dobie {	1917	52
THE OPEN WINDOW. }	1918	56
— THE LOST PHOEBE. By Theodore Dreiser . . . . .	1916	59
LA DERNIÈRE MOBILISATION. By W. A. Dwiggin	1915	61
THE EMPEROR OF ELAM. By H. G. Dwight . . . . .	1917	62
THE CITIZEN. By James Francis Dwyer . . . . .	1915	66
THE GAY OLD DOG. By Edna Ferber . . . . .	1917	67
BLIND VISION. By Mary Mitchell Freedley . . . . .	1918	71
IMAGINATION. By Gordon Hall Gerould . . . . .	1918	73

# CONTENTS

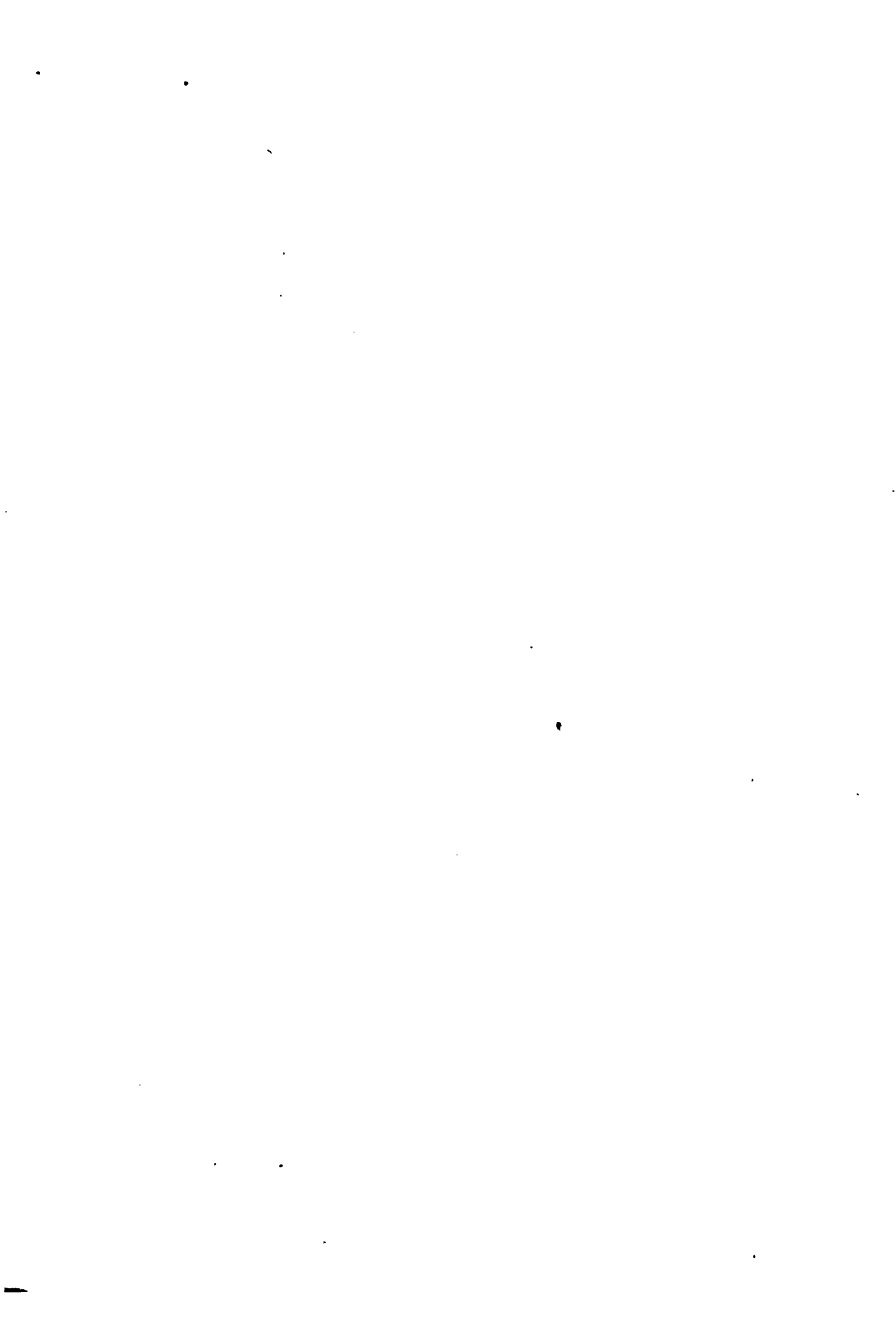
## PAGE

THE KNIGHT'S MOVE. By Katherine Fullerton		
Gerould . . . . .	1917	75
IN MAULMAIN FEVER-WARD. By George Gilbert	1918	77
— A JURY OF HER PEERS. By Susan Glaspell . . . . .	1917	83
THE SILENT INFARE. By Armistead C. Gordon . . . . .	1916	86
— THE CAT OF THE CANE-BRAKE. } By Frederick Stu-	1916	89
THE BUNKER MOUSE. } art Greene }	1917	92
WHOSE DOG — ? By Frances Gregg . . . . .	1915	95
— MAKING PORT. } By Richard Matthews Hallett { . . . . .	1916	96
RAINBOW PETE. } . . . . .	1917	98
LIFE. By Ben Hecht . . . . .	1915	100
THE FATHER'S HAND. By George Humphrey . . . . .	1918	101
T. B. } . . . . .	1915	103
"ICE WATER, PL — !" } By Fannie Hurst { . . . . .	1916	106
GET READY THE WREATHS. } . . . . .	1917	109
MR. EBERDEEN'S HOUSE. } By Arthur Johnson } . . . . .	1915	112
— THE VISIT OF THE MASTER. } . . . . .	1918	116
THE STRANGE-LOOKING MAN. By Fannie Kem-		
ble Johnson . . . . .	1917	118
VENGEANCE IS MINE. By Virgil Jordan . . . . .	1915	119
THE CALLER IN THE NIGHT. } By Burton Kline { . . . . .	1917	120
IN THE OPEN CODE. } . . . . .	1918	124
LITTLE SELVES. By Mary Lerner . . . . .	1916	126
THE WILLOW WALK. By Sinclair Lewis . . . . .	1918	129
THE WEAVER WHO CLAD THE SUMMER. By Har-		
ris Merton Lyon . . . . .	1915	136
THE SUN CHASER. By Jeannette Marks . . . . .	1916	139
THE STORY VINTON HEARD AT MALLORIE. By		
Katharine Prescott Moseley . . . . .	1918	143
HEART OF YOUTH. } By Walter J. Muilen- { . . . . .	1915	145
AT THE END OF THE ROAD. } burg }	1916	147
AT THE END OF THE PATH. By Newbold Noyes . . . . .	1915	149
THE WHALE AND THE GRASSHOPPER. By Seumas		
O'Brien . . . . .	1915	151
IN BERLIN. By Mary Boyle O'Reilly . . . . .	1915	153
THE INTERVAL. By Vincent O'Sullivan . . . . .	1917	154
THE TOAST TO FORTY-FIVE. By William Dudley		
Pelley . . . . .	1918	156



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE BIG STRANGER ON DORCHESTER HEIGHTS. By	
Albert Du Verney Pentz . . . . .	1916 159
"A CERTAIN RICH MAN —." By Lawrence Perry	1917 161
THE PATH OF GLORY. By Mary Brecht Pulver .	1917 165
EXTRA MEN. By Harrison Rhodes . . . . .	1918 170
THE WAITING YEARS. By Katharine Metcalf	
Roof . . . . .	1915 172
ZELIG. } By Benjamin Rosenblatt { . . .	1915 174
THE MENORAH. } . . .	1916 176
THE SURVIVORS. } By Elsie Singmaster { . . .	1915 178
PENANCE. } . . .	1916 180
FEET OF GOLD. By Arthur Gordon Smith . . .	1916 182
SOLITAIRE. By Fleta Campbell Springer . . .	1918 184
THE YELLOW CAT. } . . .	1915 189
DOWN ON THEIR KNEES. } By Wilbur Daniel { . . .	1917 192
CHING, CHING, CHINAMAN. } Steele { . . .	1917 194
THE DARK HOUR. } . . .	1918 200
THE BIRD OF SERBIA. By Julian Street . . .	1918 202
THE BOUNTY JUMPER. } By Mary Synon { . . .	1915 207
NONE SO BLIND. } . . .	1917 210
HALF-PAST TEN. By Alice L. Tildesley . . .	1916 212
AT ISHAM'S. By Edward C. Venable . . . .	1918 214
DE VILMARTE'S LUCK. By Mary Heaton Vorse .	1918 216
THE WHITE BATTALION. By Frances Gilchrist	
Wood . . . . .	1918 219



## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

Read the story before taking up the exercises.

Consult the biographical data in the Yearbooks for 1916, 1917, and 1918.

Observe to what extent the various authors have reflected the country or region in which they have lived. What conclusions do you draw?

Many of the stories conform to the laws of the "Greek Unities." Name them.

The following list is composed of the stories which are best for *structural* study.

—"A Simple Act of Piety"

—"The Sacrificial Altar"

—"The Water Hole"

+ "The Great Auk"

—"Boys Will Be Boys"

—"The Gay Old Dog"

—"The Knight's Move"

—"In Maulmain Fever-Ward"

+ "A Jury of Her Peers"

+ "The Cat of the Cane-Brake"

—"The Bunker Mouse"

+ "T. B."

+ "'Ice Water, Pl——!'"

—"Get Ready the Wreaths"

—"Mr. Eberdeen's House"

—"The Willow Walk"

+ "'A Certain Rich Man——'"

—"The Path of Glory"

+ "The Waiting Years"

—"Solitaire"

+ "The Yellow Cat"

## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

- "Down on Their Knees"
- "Ching, Ching, Chinaman"
- + "The Bounty-Jumper"
- + "None So Blind"
- + "Half-Past Ten."

The plus signs are prefixed to the titles of stories which present the action in a closely circumscribed time and place. Study the stories to which the minus sign is prefixed to see how the authors have managed an extended period of time and place, or of either. On what phase of the action has emphasis been placed? How has each author achieved unity of effect? Notice the definite plot stages in these narratives marked by excellence of structure. Although the technique of every writer may differ from that of every other, yet in his story he will see to it, consciously or unconsciously, that high points, "lights," or climaxes occur. It is a far call from the Roman *biga* to the modern automobile; but wheels, body and motor attachment characterize each as a vehicle. From Poe to the present, the short-story vehicle has had, and will continue to have, certain type features.

The titles should be studied for their attractiveness, originality, suggestiveness and bearing on the story.

The title may be:

- a. The name of the chief character—"Onnie," "Chautonville."
- b. An epithet applied to the chief character—"The Great Auk," "The Bunker Mouse."
- c. A place—"Mr. Eberdeen's House," "The Water-Hole."
- d. A suggestion of—1. An objective theme or idea—"The Excursion," "The Wake." 2. A subjective theme or idea—"The Sacrificial Altar," "Boys will be Boys."
- e. An allusion expressed fully, in part, or conveyed by implication—"Vengeance is Mine," "The Path of Glory."

One of the most difficult titles to create is that which

## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

has a veiled suggestion, some bearing on the story that is clear or significant only after the story has been read; e.g., "Get Ready the Wreaths," "The Interval."

Group the stories according to dominant motives, observing with what frequency certain universal motive-themes occur. For example, the sacrifice motive is found in the following: "The Sacrificial Altar," "Onnie," "The Emperor of Elam," "The Gay Old Dog," "The Knight's Move," "The Bunker Mouse," "Making Port," "The Sun Chaser," "Heart of Youth," "A Certain Rich Man," "Zelig," "The Menorah," "The Bounty-Jumper," "None So Blind."

In each of the stories just named, what *feeling* or power prompts the sacrifice? What is the sacrifice? What is the effect of the sacrifice on the one making it? On the one for whom it is made? On the reader? On the final story-impression?

Study the following as the best examples of realism: "The Excursion," "Ma's Pretties," "Lonely Places," "The Silent Infare," "The Big Stranger on Dorchester Heights." What difference, structurally, do you observe between these narratives and those developed by the more "romantic" writer?

In every story try to find indications of the author's theories about fiction or Art in general. For instance, in "Feet of Gold": "Naturally, since all of us are artists, we seek the Truth through Beauty"; etc. (p. 309).

Characters may be described by the author. This, the so-called "direct" method, is not in reality so direct or vivid as the so-called "indirect" method. By the latter a character reveals himself through act, speech, gesture; he is also portrayed by what others say about him, and by their reactions toward him.

What difference exists in spirit, mood and tempo between the stories marked, respectively, by the direct and the indirect methods?

By how many stories are you attracted at the beginning? Does the drawing power lie in character, suggested action, the picture of a setting, the mood or

## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

atmosphere, in some bit of philosophy, or other appeal?

Do any of the stories fall below expectation first aroused? Why? How many fulfill the initial promise?

Which have the best endings? How many of these seemed inevitable from an early stage of the action? How many might have had diverse endings, altogether? How many might have used different incidents for the close, with the same general effect?

Which of the narratives seem to you most artistically representative of life?

According to the localities represented by these authors, try to arrive at the "short-story center" of the United States.

In the following studies, try to enter constructively into the processes indicated. Otherwise the exercises will lose part of their value.

## **STUDIES IN DETAIL**





## A SIMPLE ACT OF PIETY

GERMINAL IDEA: Captain Abdullah, an Asiatic, but educated partly, and living altogether, in the Occident, finds himself at times, he declares, in the position, less emotional than intellectual and cultural, where he has to make a choice between the ideals of East, or West of Suez. In addition, his friends often ask him to explain certain Oriental characteristics, motivations and viewpoints.

"Due either to a vital difference in the acceptance and usage of basic standards, or to my personal inability of expressing with the spoken word what I feel tersely to be true, I have always been unable in these discussions to express the one truth which I know; namely, that all this talk about the Orient being romantic and mysterious and rather high strung is asinine drivel, that indeed the shoe hurts on the other foot, and that it is the West which is romantic, both as to life and motivation of life, while the East is as drab and grey and square as a question in abstract dynamics.

"I make this claim chiefly in regard to the Chinese, who are the Orientals *par excellence*. I consider them the most logical, the most straight thinking, and by the same token, the most civilized race on earth, not excepting the Latins, the Hindus, the Arabs, or the Anglo-Saxons. I believe them to be the only people who live up to the sound dogma that two and two make four, and never four and a quarter, or three and two thirds. I hold that they are the easiest people in the world to understand, that they carry their hearts on their sleeves, and that they

## 2 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

always mean exactly what they say, and say exactly what they mean, in direct contrast to the Occidentals. . . .

"The starting point of my tale, a whole series of Chinatown tales, directly due to a conversation I had in Chicago with Mr. Ray Long of the *Red Book*, who said that since I seemed unable to interpret the Sons of the Middle Kingdom with the spoken word I should try the written word, was therefore the fundamental prosiness and simplicity of the Oriental, the Chinaman, in contrast to the complicated, suicidal emotionalism and maniacal psychologizing of the Occidental — the latter characteristic including a painful trick of dissecting emotions to such a degree that they cease to be emotions. I know China and the Chinese intimately, and am fairly familiar with some of their dialects.

"From a primitive, Occidental viewpoint, murder and a wife's faithlessness seem to be the most important things. From an as primitive Eastern viewpoint, the same two things are the most negligible things. The thing which matters most to the Oriental is honor and piety, including their correct, codified outer observances.

"Thence my story."

**PLOT.** Structurally perfect, the plot grows naturally out of character.

The order of presentation begins with the

*Dénouement:* Nag Hong Fah kills Señora Garcia.

*Circumstances antecedent* to the story action are next presented.— 1. Fanny's marriage to Nag Hong Fah indicated in "She was his wife," etc. 2. Account of Fanny. 3. Nag Hong Fah's operations preceding the proposal. (Note the introduction of a second line of interest in the relations between Nag Hong Fah and Yung Long, and Yung Quai.) 4. The incident of the proposal. (Notice the clues: Fanny claims a right to the streets, a pointer which is augmented by the addition made, under her breath, to her promise, "I'll play square.")

*Initial Incident:* Through Nag Hong Fah's invi-

tation to Yung Long, "Come! Have a drink!" Fanny and Yung Long have opportunity to appraise each other.

*Steps toward Dramatic Climax:* 1. Nag Hong Fah pays cash to Yung Long, whom heretofore he has paid on ninety days' leeway. (What does this signify as to the relations of the two Chinamen?)

2. Birth of Brian, Fanny's son; the bestowal of gifts upon Fanny by her Chinese husband.

3. The incident between Fanny and her friend Mamie Ryan (to indicate that the Chink is playing square, and therefore Fanny). Indications of Fanny's happiness.

4. Fanny is impressed by Yung Long but holds to her "squareness."

5. Nag Hong Fah acquires an option on an up-town restaurant for his second son.

6. Little Fanny is born, bringing a "change into the marital relations"; this time, no gifts are bestowed.

7. Nag tells Fanny he has given up the option. This information on his part leads directly to the

*Dramatic Climax:* First peak: the excellent scene between Fanny and Nag Hong Fah, where the *racial struggle* is best dramatized. Fanny's imploring fails against the stony wall of Nag Hong Fah's determination. All must be as he says; Little Fanny will be disposed of as he sees fit. With Fanny the greater wrong disappears in the lesser; she forgets her daughter's education in recalling that she had received no presents at the child's birth. "A bracelet. . . . That's what I'm gonna get!" marks the beginning of the resolution of the complication, which has been so skilfully effected. The first peak of the climax is succeeded by the second peak: Yung Long in passing receives Fanny's message, "Swell looker!"

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* Summary

## 4 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

repetitions of the dramatic climax scene emphasize the winning out of Nag Hong Fah. 2. Nag Hong Fah receives permission from the official head of Fanny's family to beat her. 3. She becomes the submissive wife; the family seems a model of happiness.

4. Fanny exhibits an "imitation" bracelet.

5. Her apparent adherence to "the straight and narrow" is intensified by Brian's report of the Finnish sailor episode.

6. Fanny comes down with pneumonia. (Does this seem logical or a too obvious device of the author?)

7. Nag writes to Yung Quai and sends money for her transportation to New York.

8. He indicates to the dying Fanny that he will educate her daughter, and from the sale of Fanny's possessions—including the imitation bracelet.

*Climax of Action* in the first line of interest.—

Fanny, in a magnificent final flame of contempt and victory, declares the worth of the bracelet, and that Yung Long gave it to her. (Recall the allusion, page 4, to this point as the "dramatic climax" for Nag Hong Fah.)

*Steps toward the Dénouement:* The scene between Nag Hong Fah and Yung Long, wherein Nag conveys to Yung his knowledge of the gift, and "motivates" the real cause of the gift. Yung affirms Nag's judgment, and further indicates that Señora Garcia might best be put out of the way. Nag Hong Fah agrees that it would be but a simple act of piety and goes to get his knife. (Do they here "mean what they say" or "say what they mean"?)

The *struggle*, then, in the first line of interest (the story of Fanny and Nag Hong Fah) is one between the Occident and the Orient. The Occident wins, in the person of Fanny. But because of the sec-

ond line of interest (the story of Nag Hong Fah, Yung Long and Yung Quai), the victory gives way to the victory of the Orient. Study the story for the points of contact of these two lines, the complication effected, and the unification of the two interests.

*Suspense:* Suspense sets in at the beginning, when after the murder, the question arises, "Why did he kill her?" This question is accompanied by a desire to know more about the murderer. The story if it fulfils the implied promise will explain. Desire to know whether the murderer is apprehended is satisfied after the next hundred words or so, in the sentence, "For he is still at liberty." Herein, also, lies an element of novelty; the more unoriginal story presents the crime, then arouses suspense as to whether the criminal will be caught, and justice meted out. (Study the story for further working of the principle of suspense. What question motivates your reading after Nag Hong Fah beats Fanny, for example?)

*Suggestion:* What is suggested to the reader in Fanny's becoming a model wife? In Miss Ritter's speech about "Real love"? In the "imitation" bracelet? How much of the business "off-stage," after Fanny's subsidence, is built up by the reader?

**CHARACTERIZATION.** The dominant character interest lies in the racial features, which are set off by contrast with each other. The author manifests skill in creating hybrid Fanny, a product of racial crossing. In order of importance, the main figures are: Nag Hong Fah, Fanny, Yung Long, Quai Long.

Nag Hong Fah is played up as the chief character through

A. His rôle; he is easily the most important by virtue of the part assigned to him.

## 6 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

### B. Dramatic management on the author's part.

1. He is the figure most constantly found on the stage.
2. He is the protagonist in the scenes presented.
3. He is frequently followed behind the scenes. (Purpose here being to create variety of effect, so far as is consistent with a larger unity.)

### C. Stylistic management.

1. Giving to Nag Hong Fah the places of rhetorical emphasis — the beginning and the end of the story.

Study the story for concrete examples that illustrate the main points just made. Study, also, the proportion given to other characters. What is the greatest contributory value of Señora Garcia? Of Edith Ritter? Nag Sen Yet? The Chinese Soothsayer? Brian Neill? Little Brian? Mamie Ryan? Little Fanny? Compare the author's ability to describe physical details with his skill in revealing mental characteristics. To what extent does the outer personality reveal the inner? Answer for each of the important characters.

#### LOCAL COLOR.

A. *Setting*: The locality is conveyed in the first sentence. Where is it repeated, and how? What contrasts do you find in the larger setting? What details, for example, contribute to the Oriental characteristics? Which to the American? Value of the opium? of the schooner of beer? of the ivory sticks? Why is the flat (page 5) described in detail as to furnishings? (Give two reasons, from two points of view.) What is the value of the contrast between indications of wealth and of the neighborhood features?

B. *Customs*: What customs testify to Captain Abdullah's intimate acquaintance with the Chinese?

C. *Speech*: Compare the Oriental matter, man-

ner, and meaning with the American matter, manner, and meaning.

D. *Dress*: What bearing on character have the accessories of dress? Yung Long's bowler hat, his loose sleeves and fan, Fanny's furs, the earrings of jade, and the bracelet — all serve what purpose?

*Atmosphere*: Captain Abdullah says (page 4) "the tale is of the Orient." Note that he has secured the Oriental *feel*, or atmosphere, modified slightly by the American intrusion, through the harmonizing of character, speech, dress, customs,—above all, by emphasizing the things "which matter most to the Oriental." Contrast to similar Occidental characteristics is subordinated to the intensification, and is, therefore, contributory to the larger impression.

As to the short-story, Captain Abdullah thinks that length has nothing to do with it. "It can be seven hundred words long, or seventy thousand. As to the latter length, I consider Frank Swinnerton's *Nocturne* a short-story." And he offers as a tentative definition this: "The short-story is a story grouped logically about the same character and characters, every bit of plot and action working together to affect, influence, and make a background for the same character and characters, eliminating, in contrast to a novel, all side issues." . . .

## THE SACRIFICIAL ALTAR

GERMINAL IDEA. "It is so long since I wrote 'The Sacrificial Altar' that I am rather hazy. My impression is that I set out to draw a born artist hampered by certain disabilities, and one of these being a disinclination for life and utter absence of the love instinct, all the forces of his nature concentrated upon his art, until they reached the point of obsession. It was not until after he had written the last book that he reacted to the normal instincts he had inherited and which had been automatically developed by the most normal bourgeoisie on earth."—*Gertrude Atherton.*

### ANALYSIS OF PLOT.

*Initial Incident:* César Dupont persuades Louis Bac to meet Berthe. (Note, even in the single incident, the struggle—one of wills—and the argument which wins the younger man.)

*Steps to the Dramatic Climax:* 1. Louis meets Berthe and "feels nothing." 2. "—a daring idea sprang . . . darted into Louis's relaxed brain." 3. Louis goes to the Dupont mansion, steals to the girl's room, sees her asleep. "He gazed resentfully at that diminished beauty. . . . Why not give her a fright?" He seizes a pillow and presses it against her face. "She made a sudden downward movement, gurgling. With a quick, cat-like leap he was on her chest."

*Dramatic Climax:* His soul and passions are liberated. "The body lay limp and flabby at last."

*Steps to the Climax of Action:* 1. Louis takes pains to divert suspicion from himself. 2. In the next three months he writes his book. (Note that



this is the climax of action in the *artist's* struggle, that the murder is the turning point after which he succeeds artistically. But the climax of action for the *man* is yet to come.) 3. At the end of the three months, he hears that another has been hanged as the murderer. 4. He confesses to M. Dupont. 5. Dupont refuses to believe the story. 6. Louis writes his confession.

*The Climax of Action:* He walks to the Catholic cemetery and shuts himself into the family vault.

*Dénouement:* Left to the reader. By a clue on page 16 one would gather that Bac drank poison or cut his wrists.

Study the development of this plot, as to scenes, summaries, condensations, accelerations, gaps, and omissions with reference to the artistic effect. For example, the initial incident is presented dramatically, the characters act it before the reader. The steps to the dramatic climax are presented partly in retrospect, from Louis's point of view; those nearest the climax are given dramatically.

Study the plot, also, with respect to the struggle. What details are "for" Louis's artistic success? How are they related to those "against" his physical being?

Is the plot, in connection with the development of Louis's character, probable? What logic has the author employed to make it seem so? Mrs. Atherton's own testimony is valuable by way of reflecting the artist's temperament. As she herself says, although she has never been impelled to murder and has had always a consuming interest in life, yet until the war, she never permitted anything to interfere with her work.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** What value is there in Louis Bac's being French? Mrs. Atherton plays up Louis by making him the spot-light figure and by presenting the

## 10 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

story from his angle. The invasion of his mind results, incidentally, in the reader's seeing the setting, situation, and characters as he sees them.

Study the author's description and exposition of Louis Bac, then his speeches and his acts. What do the other characters think of him? Observe how the various methods of portraiture strengthen one another in the finished portrait.

Berthe is lightly touched. The reader must "believe" in her as a beautiful young girl, but must not give her too great sympathy. Overmuch attention to her would have detracted from the character unity of the narrative.

César Dupont is the contemporary representative of the confidant, offering opportunity for dramatic form (in the scene work) and consequent interest. Unity of action and effect is conserved by making him Berthe's uncle; moreover, probability and verisimilitude are gained by the relationship. Madame Dupont, M. Jules Constant, Louis's servants, and others, are the background characters, carefully subdued so as not to interfere with the chief action and consequent story unity.

Note every reference to San Francisco, then ask yourself how strongly the setting works toward the securing of the reader's credulity. Try telling the story, mentally, without allusion to locale. What is lost? "On a pedestal was a vase that had belonged to Napoleon, wired and fastened down," etc. What is the value of this sentence in the direction of capturing belief? Study the management of the *time* element.

**ATMOSPHERE.** Study the *feeling* of the story in connection with the place. The first sentence of the narrative strikes the tone "gray," and gives the setting. "Lone Mountain" conveys what impression? The cemetery, used so powerfully in the climax of action, deepens the gray note to its most somber hue. This increased depth of tone works integratively with the action to the powerful climax. Point out all the words and phrases that intensify the atmosphere.

**PRESENTATION OF THE ACTION.** The narrator is the author who knows all, sees all, and exercises omniscience over Louis's mind.

Tell the plot without adhering to Louis's point of view, placing every event in the order of its occurrence. Note the loss in suspense and cumulative effect.

**DETAILS.**

*Suspense:* Where does the story first grip you, and why? At what point does the cause for suspense change, and with what bearing on your interest?

*Clues:* Make a list of clues to the tragic conclusion; e.g., "If I am awake" (page 33).

*Proportion:* How much of the narrative is devoted to antecedent circumstances? Notice the long preliminary, the logical necessity for an accurate disclosure of character at the beginning, and compare it with the fine art which leaves the dénouement partly to the reader.

*Suggestion.*—At what points did you unconsciously create incidents or summarize them?

**GENERAL METHODS OF MRS. ATHERTON.** "I rarely have the solution of a story or novel in mind, merely the principal character, the central idea, and the *mis-en-scène*. I prefer to let the story work itself out. Else, where would be the fun in it? Writing to me is an adventure, and if I knew beforehand how it was to turn out I should take no more interest in it than I should take in the following year if I knew what was to happen every day. Nevertheless, I would reject any finale that I did not think logical. An arbitrary ending for the sake of dramatic effect or conciliating the public makes the whole book or story worthless artistically."

## THE EXCURSION

GERMINAL IDEA, OR STARTING-POINT. "The 'Excursion' was written from the humorous delight I have always felt in excursions; it was started merely as humorous description of certain inevitable excursion types. I put the 'story' into already written appreciations of sartorial and millinery triumphs as demonstrated on any well-developed excursion."—*Edwina Stanton Babcock.*

CLASSIFICATION. A study in realism, wherein the general picture and all the excursionists are of quite as much importance as the few predominant characters.

PLOT. Loosely interpreted, plot may be termed a summing up of the "story," a recapitulation. Technically, the plot is the underlying plan "of which no part can be removed without ruin to the whole"; it is the development of the struggle or conflict which every "short-story" possesses in common with the drama.

What in "The Excursion" is the struggle? What part does the dialogue between the two sisters play in the revelation of the struggle? If the struggle were made dominant, what lamentable result would follow for the "situation" value of the whole narrative? Is there a hint near the conclusion that the struggle may have an outcome? Is the plot finished, then, as the author has left it? What is the embryonic dramatic climax or turning point? (Find the moment when the feelings of the passengers change toward Mrs. Tuttle.)

CHARACTERIZATION. What types are represented in Mrs. Tuttle? Mrs. Cronney? Mrs. Tinneray? Mr. Tinneray? Mrs. Mealer? Mrs. Bean? The "lady in a purple raincoat"? "A mild mannered youth with no

chin?" Miss Mealer? Hypatia Smith? Test the economy and effectiveness of Miss Babcock's portrayal by asking yourself what further things these people would do or say. Are the types such as would be found in the same boat?

Compare the few figures of prominence with those of the background. Are they in "high relief" or "low relief"?

ATMOSPHERE. Realistic; it has the "feel" of the typical American excursion. To achieve it, were necessary the author's keen observation, sane vision, and sense of humor.

ACCESSORY DETAILS. Enhancing and emphasizing the reality of the occasion are the features, objects, and acts associated with excursions. The crunch of peanuts, the search for chewing gum, the squinting through ivory-headed canes,— such details of the composition indicate meticulous workmanship on the part of Miss Babcock. Notice whether these features appeal rather to sight, to hearing, or to other senses. What do you deduce?

GENERAL METHODS OF MISS BABCOCK. "To me, in writing, the story is keyed by a face, the note of a man's or a woman's voice, a bit of lonely moorland, a scene in a railway station, some little amusing bit some one tells me. Then comes incubation for an absurdly uncertain time. Then I dress up in a mass of what seems to me related detail the significant centre, trying usually to thrust in a few bits of humor for the simple reason that life is made of it and the huge wonder is that the whole world does not 'grin like a dog and go about the city.' . . . I love to paint things I've seen — particularly natural things. . . ."

## CRUELITIES

**STARTING POINT.** Edwina Stanton Babcock says that "Cruelties" was written around the figure of the spinster, Frenzy, at whom she has had peeps for nearly eighteen years. Her formal and carefully elaborate English,—her garden, and her worries over it — all are drawn from what Miss Babcock considers story material "for any one." Mrs. Tyarck and Mrs. Capron were painted in contrasts, and "little Johnny Tyarck and what went on inside of his wispy head at prayer meeting was put in because of my own ceaseless wonder as to what goes on inside the heads of the Johnny Tyarcks of this world."

"Cruelties" took a long time to crystallize and it seemed to me that the dénouement never really consummated. I longed to have the wayward girl more of a person, but the confines of the story would not allow it. I wrote four drafts of it, cutting out quantities each time."

**PLOT.** Compared with "The Excursion," this story possesses a framework more substantial and of better architecture. Though most readers will be interested in the personality of the characters, rather than in the action, nevertheless they will enjoy the steady and perceptible progress to the solution of the slight complication. This complication the author has effected through the entangling of two interests. The first is the one-sided struggle which arises between the women, Mrs. Tyarck *et al*, and Miss Giddings — one-sided, inasmuch as the former are active, while the latter is passive. It is motivated by Frenzy's attempt to rid her roses of worms. (Is this motivation sufficient to account for the animosity? What circumstance abets it? What value

has the fact that Mrs. Capron is a tract distributor?) The second line of interest has to do with the young girl's downfall and rehabilitation. The fact that Miss Giddings becomes her champion increases the petty animosity. The outcome of the complication shows Frenzy triumphant, in the scene between her and Mrs. Tyarck.

Are you satisfied with this *dénouement*? Why?

What motivation has Miss Babcock employed to explain the girl's taking refuge with Miss Giddings? Is it adequate and convincing?

*Initial Incident:* Two phases, each suggesting an individual line of interest. 1. Scene in Frenzy's shop; the women see the girl pass. 2. Scene in Frenzy's garden, emphasizing the struggle between Frenzy and insects. (What significance has the fact that the ladies enter into relations with the fly-paper? What symbolic part has the cherry tree?)

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* Mrs. Capron prays the Lord to "keep us from needless cruelties." The author summarily indicates that Frenzy becomes the butt of petty spite.

*Dramatic Climax:* First phase, as narrated, lies in Miss Giddings's metaphorical burial. Her enemies are at the highest peak of their mean triumph. The second phase, intensifying the first, indicates the girl's downfall. (Point out the forecast to this dramatic climax.)

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* 1. The incident of the girl's return. 2. Miss Frenzy keeps her, as an assistant. 3. Mrs. Tyarck, in disapproval, takes her patronage to the "other" store; Mrs. Capron bestows tracts.

*Climax of Action:* Frenzy turns the tables in completely routing her enemy. (Scene between Mrs. Tyarck and Frenzy.)

*Dénouement:* Frenzy's conjecture about the cherry-tree closes the story.

(What does the author lose in summarizing, rather

## 16 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

than in dramatizing, her dramatic climax? What does she gain in relative values by its subdual?)

**CHARACTERIZATION.** By emphasizing physical traits Miss Babcock has differentiated her characters unmistakably, if a bit obviously. Frenzy's stiffly refined diction (in contrast to the slangy speech of coarse Mrs. Tyarck), and Mrs. Capron's hawking illustrate her method. Tabulate the characteristics of the chief figures.

How has she individualized them by their acts? In connection with your study of personal appearance, evaluate the use: 1. Of the "two large pins of green . . . like bulbous, misplaced eyes" . . . 2. Of the wing on Mrs. Tyarck's hat. 3. Of the girl's red sweater.

The only masculine figures who appear on the stage are little Johnnie Tyarck and Mr. Bloomby. Is the fact that their male presence contributes to background, or to realistic effect, a sufficient gain for shifting to their respective points of view?

Which of the characters is most frequently found in every day life?

**LOCAL COLOR.** To what extent do the details of setting (including customs, dialect, dress) typify any American rural community? Can you justify the full paragraph on the buttons?

**TIME ELEMENT.** How has the author handled the flight of months without seeming unduly to prolong the action or to break the unity of effect?

**ATMOSPHERE.** Realistic, it reflects the mood of the author who sees life as it is, rather than of the author dominated by so-called "temperament." She sees characters and events, for the most part, through the kindly glow of humor.

What double cause for smiling exists in the title of the tract delivered in the first scene? Point out other examples of humor.

"Usually in beginning a story," Miss Babcock says, "the first paragraph sets a sort of mechanism going in



me and controls the tone and atmosphere of the story. Thus, you see, I almost *have* to begin with a paragraph a little long. My great difficulty is my love of description and painting of pictures — I despair of characters because I know that one really never gets the whole character into the story, any more than one gets it in life. I think the writer must make the character act like its description. A spit-curl character must have spit-curl ideas and behavior. The more I write the more I am convinced that the writer is a slave to two contradictory convictions; that is, that he must give the truth of the story as he has visioned it, and that there *is no* truth but that the story-telling art has its very beginning in creating illusions."

## ONNIE

**CLASSIFICATION.** Onnie is a story of character; the trait exploited leads to the tragic dénouement.

**GERMINAL IDEA.** "The genesis of 'Onnie' was a desire to record the dialect of one Patrick Qualey, a gardener, now extinct. Patrick had preserved to the age of seventy his Celtic fibre quite unimpaired. I think he rather prided himself on the act, and, perhaps, embroidered the garment of his speech a trifle. He died very tamely of pneumonia, and Forest County, Pa., was *not* his abiding place. As for Onnie, I confess that I am weary of lovely Irishwomen, and a witty Irishwoman I have never met. . . ."—*Thomas Beer.*

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Read the story rapidly, and immediately ask yourself, "What impression have I received of Onnie, physically, mentally, and spiritually?" Go over the story again, making note of every mention of Onnie, and observe how forcefully, yet adroitly, the author has emphasized details. What is the value of having different characters observe her monstrosity and her homeliness?

Notice that Onnie's superstition makes her say, "The gifts of children are the blessing's of Mary's self," but that her "odd scapular" has a sinister significance throughout. Is this sinister suggestion in harmony with the final sacrifice? Estimate the number of words in the story, then the number emphasizing Onnie; finally, the proportion devoted to the main incident and preparation for it. What is the length of time over which Onnie's devotion to San extends? The length of the "story" part of the narrative? If the proportion were reversed,

what would be the effect on the character work? On the poignancy?

Name in order the other characters of the narrative, and notice the proportion given to each. Study the ways in which the author makes San a lovable youngster. Take account of h's acts, his speeches, what his father thinks of him, what the men do for his protection. In the same way, take stock of the ways whereby Percival is presented as a villain of the lowest type.

Are there too many characters in "Onnie" for best short-story effect?

PLOT. Notice that the development of the struggle lies in the latter half of the story. Define this struggle for yourself. With whom do you immediately take sides? Show how the main line of interest (Onnie's love for San) combines with the second line of interest (the one growing out of the struggle) to make the complication. Is the entanglement logically effected? Give examples. What is the first preparation for the main incident? (See page 34.) "He put in your new bathtub and Onnie jumped him for going round the house looking at things." This statement reveals the *motivation* for Percival's dislike of Onnie (whom every one else loved) and rationalizes his insult on page 36; it also explains how the villain knew the arrangement of the rooms.

The first *developed* incident, leading toward the climax, covers pages 35 and 36, beginning with the approach of Percival and ending with his punishment by Sanford.

Study the introduction of the knife and all references to it. What instruments of death in other stories of these collections have plot value?

The climax of the action is told with fine brevity. Study the *dénouement*, beginning page 42. "He sat up, tearing the blankets back." The last paragraph is marked by artistic restraint. Compare it with the end of "The Sacrificial Altar."

## 20 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

**SETTING.** How is the Pennsylvania background integrated with character and action to make the story? Over how many years does the entire action extend? By what devices of transition and by what proportion has the author subdued the time element?

**ATMOSPHERE.** The latter half of the narrative presents contrast to the first half, in spite of the plot clues. What is the value of this contrast in moods? Has the rain a contributory value? Find other instances in these stories of weather conditions emphasizing the impression. Point out all the instances of dramatic forecast, particularly those which serve to unify the earlier and later portions of the narrative (*e.g.*, "And anything could happen there," page 28).

## MISS WILLETT

**THE STARTING-POINT.** Mr. Benefield states that it has been so long since he wrote "Miss Willett" that the processes of growth have gone out of his memory. He is sure, however, that the story had its origin in a show-window exhibit on a street in New York, where a negro woman of a most evil expression used to demonstrate a folding bed. "I probably noted the exhibit in a book, left it for weeks or months and then one day when I needed an idea I opened the note-book, turned over the pages, stared at the scribbled note, and the elements of the story as written floated to the center of consciousness and joined in a more or less rough but complete whole. After that it was merely a matter of chiseling it into shape."—*Barry Benefield*.

The expression "floated to the center of consciousness" seems to imply an inspirational writing force, much as does Mrs. Pulver's statement, "My crew will come to me ready named, ready behaved" (see page 169).

The striking relation between Mr. Benefield's original idea and his subsequently developed story is one of contrast. It is noteworthy that *character* dominates in each; incident is subordinate.

**THE DEVELOPMENT.** The principle of suggestion, by which this author has conveyed more than he could express, works powerfully. Observe the first effect created by the face of the sculptured Christ. "She noticed that the long white dress of the infant," etc. (page 40). What are succeeding effects?

**THE ACTION.** Miss Willett's fortunes are in the descendant at the beginning of the story. Where do

## 22 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

they take a turn? Is this dramatic climax motivated by the influence of the face? ("Yesterday you had nothin'; to-day you got everything." This speech clinches, for the reader who prefers the mystical interpretation, the influence of the sculptured Jesus. To the non-mystical reader, this logic alone is satisfactory: loss of job had meant an unconscious spur, the spur of desperation, with unanticipated success.) What is the sequel to the day's success which marks Miss Willett's continued interest in the face behind the green-slatted window? State in order the steps leading to the discovery. What is the climax of action? Does it constitute a surprise for the reader as for Miss Willett? What is the dénouement? With the dénouement, dawns the realization of what underlying theme?

**THE MAIN CHARACTER.** According to the mystical interpretation the chief character is the sculptured figure. Otherwise, Miss Willett is the principal. According to the two interpretations, the two become active and passive, reciprocally.

What is the fundamental impression you receive of Miss Willett's physical person? What, to a writer, is the advantage in choosing a very large or very small person as a main character? Recall classic examples. Note all references to Miss Willett's big bloneness, and study the economy with which she is kept before the reader.

**DETAILS.** Where is the gray kitten first mentioned? What is the value, to the plot, of this introduction?

Glance over the narrative for words of color, light, and sound. Which are predominant? The effect on the story and on its verisimilitude? Color-value of the red geranium with its single flower? Value for effect of reality?

Study the easy manner in which the setting is given to the reader.

## SUPERS

**CLASSIFICATION.** A single scene sketch; it is like a charcoal drawing.

**PLOT.** The plot, concealed beneath the picture, lies in the objectifying of the eternal struggle for bread and meat.

**SETTING.** The place is the street near the theatre door: like a magnet it draws the individual human beings, who cohere in the mass until the attracting power is removed.

**CHARACTERS.** This mass, or aggregate, emphasizes the individual struggle, at the same time it engulfs individual personality. What does the name "Supers" indicate, literally? Figuratively? What part does Red Beard play? How does he, too, contribute to the larger unity at the same time he offers a note of contrast?

**ATMOSPHERE.** Sordid, drab realism, uncompromising in its ugliness.

## BUSTER

**OPENING INCIDENT.** Emphasis falls at once on the society which the hero disconcerts. The correctness of living, the tranquil setting, provide the formal serenity he is to break. "Lucien forgot himself completely," note the effect of the impeccable chauffeur's exclamation as testimony to the "demon boy." The reader, startled with the characters into attention, catches the epithet up with interest and expectation.

Are the recounted escapades and the antecedent scene necessary? or, in the wealth of instance which follows, does the recountal seem extensive? Is the relaxation so effected pleasant? Does the rehearsal of the antecedent episode slow the tempo and hold the story back unnecessarily? Besides revealing Buster, the material permits the cousin's mental distress to accumulate in effect and allows time for the race to and from Boston.

Within the economy of the first picture, Buster's manner, the striking factor of his aspect, and his adolescent growth are suggested. Notice that the following scene enlarges the same points. Notice that in this scene and the others between Buster and his aunts, Buster does the talking. The aunts interpose, occasionally, protest and reasoning. Do the scenes lack excitement other than Buster's excitement? There is not the vigorous clash of speech with speech; for that, the characters are too well mannered. If the struggle wants intensity, is there compensation in the naturalness of the futile boyish tirading? Buster seems to fume?

The trouble at the bakery serves to remind the reader that Buster, in the apparent lull, is intent on his own



purposes. It serves, also, to divert the reader's mind from the preparation for the aeroplane incident.

The Bazaar at Dawn Towers: The personnel for this scene is usual; there are the usual élite and the climber from the West. (Notice the social status of Oklahoma and Montana!) The futurist palace is a relieving detail.

The incident caps the social crimes of Buster; it provides the climax for part one of the story, playing off the vitality of the boy's contention against the vanities and half-sincerity of his Aunt's set. Like Buster's passionate repetition, "I've got to know," it is dramatic forecast. Here is the significance of the story: youth struggling with convention for its destiny.

The latter half of the story is fulfilment and realization.

Does the timing of this part — "and yesterday at dusk" — injure the dramatic reality? The writer suggests this is an account, a diary, a rehearsal.

EPISODIC PLOT. The incidents of the plot do not progress logically, as steps in action having a consequential relation. But they are instances making the same character point, having this unity. In the important scenes the events are held in combination further by their centralization about three characters: Dr. Lake, Miss Edith, and Buster stand out at beginning, climax and end.

Account for the animosity against Dr. Lake in the boy's tone and the story tone. Does the writer in her characterization of him caricature the doctor? (the emphasis on his eminence and his shirt-front in the opening scenes, on his fright in the climax scene). Contrast his appearance in the two parts of the story; his self-importance in the earlier scenes with his eventual sacrifice. The traditions reveal in the crisis their underlying sanction. Does his geniality in the final scene convince?

Cousin Edith, if typical, is set apart from her environment by a quality of humor and by her angle — as sym-

## 26 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

pathetic observer of Buster. Observe that Buster feels the difference in her character. Is there a note of affectation in her manner? Notice that, though she is influenced by the aviator's tirade, she is sufficiently herself to remark his manners. Does Buster work in her the magic of complete conviction? Is her wordy "gush" when she first sees the unconscious boy natural in tone and sentiment? She sees, remember, the "death-like" face, at the sight of which "the limp, shivering doctor pulled himself together with all his weary might." Her words "baby" the hero—does one "tuck" a brawny fist under his cheek?

Buster is pictured most completely in his unconsciousness. Do the stubborn chin there and the sulky underlip of the first scenes indicate an unpleasant willfulness? Offset this impression by details in the summary of his escapades which suggest a sympathetic kindness. Does he show in the struggle with his Aunts a personal animosity? Is the democracy revealed in the sailor episode typical of his age? Compare Aunt Charlotte's speech for German methods with the Brigadier General's on the making of the hero. Do the aviator and the ambulance-driver in their recognition of him reinforce qualities in Buster which are representative?

"Concerning 'Buster,' he isn't the portrait of any real flesh-and-blood boy. But he tries to be the composite portrait of the fourteen-year-olds that we all know, and most of us own by ties of blood,—the tempestuous darling, the pride and the despair of us. As for the story itself, it is a well-meant but probably futile attempt to convince the Average Parent,—to say nothing of the average Aunt Charlotte and Cousin Edith,—that the abysmal differences between the Busters of to-day and their own generation are not so many conclusive proofs that Buster and his tribe are essentially inferior. On the contrary! For to my eyes, the rising generation is a rising one, with a vengeance, and o'ertops its predecessors with a disconcerting splendor. So the story tries

to make this conviction clear,— and very likely fails. For one of my nearest and dearest was grieving only the other day, because her own particular Buster insists that his life's ambition is to be a fire chief. 'When we want him to be a corporation lawyer, like his father!' . . . As to definitions— could there be a compact definition of the short-story? I doubt it. It's a universal experience, put into a duodecimo edition, but it's a thousand other things, besides.

"Some day, some one with authority will answer, I hope, this question: Should the short-story writer be a writer of short-stories and nothing more? Or— should he write stories when and where he can, in the intervals of other, far more absorbing, tasks?"— *Katharine Holland Brown*.

## FOG

**GENERAL.** The first sentence in "Fog" serves two purposes. 1. It thrusts satirically at the commercializing of the short story. 2. It induces the reader to believe the inner narrative is a growth, not a construction. The author seems to have hesitated between leaving the supernatural story as one beautiful enough to stand alone, and building about it the humorous and even cynical external action. Or it may be that he saw best to set off the fragile inner narrative with the hard facts of a workaday world. Without the prelude to the story (which begins with "He was born a thousand miles from deep water") and without the sentences after the asterisks on page 73, the narrative recalls "The Brushwood Boy." And this is true, despite the rather homely dialect. If, however, the reader is duly influenced by the parts referred to, he cannot but recall Thomas Bailey Aldrich's "Struggle for Life," as a prototype.

### PLOT.

*Initial Stages:* Andy pins up the ship; his father blots it out; Andy is delirious; acquires name of Wessel's Andy.

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* Andy drifts east; seeing a model of the *Lucky Star* in Stiles's place, he asks for a job; he gets it. He reveals that he has had "a ship behind his eyes,"—a schooner like the *Lucky Star*, and his knowledge that he belongs on board. This knowledge is attended by a fear: he does not know the cause for which he must go. He indicates that something holds him back from the sea, but refuses to dis-

close it. The immediate approach to the dramatic climax is made in the story told, to the fisherman from Gloucester, by old Jem Haskins. Andy learns the facts about Dan and Hope Salisbury. Later, he asks whether there is a picture of Hope in the village.

*Dramatic Climax:* Andy steals into Ed Salisbury's house and finds Hope's picture.

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* Andy is happy now (he knows why he must go aboard the *Lucky Star*). He reveals the other vision which has been, always, back of his eyes. Hope Salisbury has the face of that vision. It is clear to him, now, that in going aboard the vessel he will meet Hope. He knows that the time is near. Immediately before the climax of action, Stiles walks down the beach. He sees a mist, blotting the blue water as it comes. Turning homeward, he sees Andy, on the edge of the beach, staring into the fog.

*Climax of Action:* As the surf closes over Andy, Stiles gathers himself to jump. Then he sees the *Lucky Star*, and Hope. Andy goes aboard. . . .

Is the "inevitable" quality of the narrative increased by making Andy "a queer one"? See Georgie, by way of contrast, in "The Brushwood Boy."

Where does suspense first operate? Where do you suspect, first, that Hope is meant to be Andy's bride?

Observe that Andy's last act might have been that of a deluded brain, and that Stiles's vision of the *Lucky Star* might have been one of hallucination. The more imaginative reader will regard the ghost-ship as objective, and will "believe" in the delayed union of Hope and Andrew.

Read Richard Middleton's "The Ghost Ship," for a frankly humorous treatment of theme. What

## 30 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

other stories in Mr. O'Brien's collections have an element of the supernatural?

Try presenting this story in pure English, from the author's point of view. Use the objective method, abstaining from entrance into the mind of any character. Take up the narrative at the point of Andrew's arrival at Stiles's, and let his "queerness" emerge through his acts and speeches.

How much creative work must you accomplish to make a consistent character of Stiles? (Here, Stiles, the narrator, must be studied through the story he presents. In the dramatic presentation of the story, he will become more objective.)

## THE WATER-HOLE

**GENERAL METHOD.** The immediate story of the water-hole is unfolded by the "rehearsed" method. What gain results from telling in a city restaurant an experience of the wilderness? Study the easy and natural way in which Hardy's story is brought forward. "You've got a concrete instance back of that" (page 18) signifies that the narrator will cite a case to prove his point. Recall other stories told for similar purposes; *e.g.*, O. Henry's "The Theory and the Hound."

Study the value of the two "I" narrators in the same story, with respect to increasing verisimilitude and making the reader "believe." Kipling's "The Courting of Dinah Shadd," for example, uses the same tactics.

Try re-telling the story by the dramatic method. Omit the enveloping city setting; transfer Hardy from the first to the third person, and keep the "spotlight" on him. Begin with the arrival of Hardy at the home of the Whitneys, and follow the course of events to their dénouement. What do you lose in richness and effectiveness? Do you gain anything in vividness or directness?

**PLOT.** Having studied preceding plot analyses, the student will find small difficulty in settling upon the main struggle in the action, the complicating line of interest, and the climactic incident. The surprise ending, however, calls for comment, in that to achieve it the author used a natural and yet somewhat novel device. Hardy has been speaking of himself, of course, in the first person. When, therefore, he refers to the love that "one of the young engineers" had for Mrs. Whitney we do not suppose that he and the engineer were identical.

Hence, we receive the shock in the final paragraph: "On the brown flesh of his forearm, I saw a queer, ragged white cross—the scar a snake bite leaves when it is cicatrized." On reflection, one recognizes that Whitney's slight deception arose from motives of delicacy, and is more than justifiable—it pleases, in that it refines Hardy's character. Deception as a means, in general, to create surprise is common (See "The Mastery of Surprise," *Bookman*, October, 1917); but it is given here a particularly excellent turn.

Observe, also, that the plot presents a variation of the familiar "triangle." The love story, however, is buried beneath the greater theme; and therefore, although it terminates in a lack of so-called poetic justice, yet its combination with the main line of interest gives utmost satisfaction.

CHARACTERS. Mr. Burt has employed a favorite artistic aid, contrast, in depicting Hardy and Whitney. Does Hardy seem anywhere too modest or too egotistic for the first person narrator? What value have the friends who hear Hardy's story in the full development of Hardy as a character?



## A CUP OF TEA

**SETTING.** Note the setting of this and "The Water-Hole," "The Knight's Move," "The Weaver Who Clad the Summer," "A Certain Rich Man." In which of them is the outer setting a place for the rehearsal of the story which follows? In which is the setting that of the immediate story-action? What is the general value of a table scene to the writer who wishes to present his story in the "rehearsed" manner? How does a camp-fire compare with it? (Read, for example, Kipling's "The Courting of Dinah Shadd.")

**INTRODUCTION, WITH EMPHASIS ON CHARACTERS.** Why is so long an introductory paragraph given to Burnaby?

Study the comment on guests and hostess, and observe that the English financier must have an important part in the ensuing action. "Sir John had inherited an imagination." Is this stated characteristic proved by subsequent disclosures?

How is Burnaby's entrance emphasized?

"She was interested by now" (page 48), an old device and an excellent one for catching the reader's attention. The logic is this: "If that fascinating lady is interested, there must be a reason." Sir Conan Doyle employs it often in the Sherlock Holmes stories, when Sherlock asks for a repetition of a situation supposedly just presented. It is thus put before the reader who assumes that it must be worth hearing once, if Sherlock will hear it twice.

What reason exists for Burnaby's story as a predecessor to Sir John's? Does it motivate the telling of Sir John's? If so, does it also prejudice the reader in

## 34 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

favor of one or the other men? Does it incite curiosity as to the squawman with a promise that curiosity will be satisfied? Suppose that some other cause produced Sir John's story and the reader were left to surmise what became of Bewsher. Would sympathy be with Bewsher in an increased or diminished degree?

Why is Burnaby's story briefer than Sir John's? Would it be possible to reverse the comparative lengths with a new story-value? Try telling Bewsher's story as he might tell it to Burnaby at the time of the tea incident.

How is point given to the squaw man's name? What is the significance of the broken champagne glass? Have literary artists often fallen back on a broken glass by way of expressing emotion? Is it true to real life? Does it *seem* true in fiction?

Is there sufficient suggestion that Bewsher's story is connected with that of Masters to justify initial interest in Sir John's narrative? (See the dénouement of Burnaby's.)

Where did you receive a hint that Masters is identifying himself with Morton?

THE HEART OF THE WHOLE STORY: MASTERS' STORY. Notice that Mr. Burt recognizes, as all artists do, the various climaxes of the narrative. This is indicated in what Sir John calls "high lights."

*The Initial Impulse* (The "first high light"): Morton's plan to cultivate the friendship of Bewsher.

*Steps toward Dramatic Climax*: The importance of himself comes home to Morton ("The second high light"). "The third did not come until fifteen years later" (Bewsher has been in India; Morton, in a Banking House in London): Morton desires a wife, luxury, and social standing. Bewsher turns up; he and Morton fall in love with the same girl. Bewsher leads, but he needs money. The "third high light," then, after fifteen years, is Bewsher's

supplication. Morton makes him a rich man, but does not promise to keep him so.

*Dramatic Climax:* Bewsher forges a check, and hands it to Morton in part payment of his indebtedness. Morton subsequently shows the check to the girl and then burns it before her eyes. He thus wins her, not aware that her heart is broken. Bewsher disappears.

*Climax of Action:* "The fourth high light" Morton marries the girl.

*Dénouement:* He suffers the realization that he can never be a gentleman; he has learned that the girl does not love him.

What statement of Sir John indicates a recognition of the turning point in the rivalry between him and Bewsher? Show that this outer or external dramatic climax is the counterpart of the "third high light."

*Dénouement of the Enveloping Narrative:* After Sir John and his wife motor away, Burnaby explains the relations between the real and the fictive characters. What is the significance of his appellation, "timber-wolf"?

What is the office of Mrs. Malcolm's closing remark?

"We are told that all writing is a process of elision, but no one seems to go further and say that short-story writing is the process of 'hitting the high spots' plus the art of making the intervals between the 'high spots' not only interesting but of such a quality that the 'high spots' do not seem strained and unnatural. I find that this is mostly done by the turn of a sentence, or by an apparently adventitious aphorism, or a paragraph of general comment.

"I do prefer the 'I' narrator greatly. 1st. It does away with the 'Smart Alec,' omniscient atmosphere of the third person, which seems to me the bane of most

## 36 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

American short-stories — the author gives an impression of groping for his story, just as a person in real life gropes when he narrates an incident. Conrad does this, and does it so beautifully. It seems to me that a 'thickness' is achieved that can be got in no other way. This, of course, does not apply to a novel, because in a novel the 'thickness' is achieved by mere length.

"Secondly, as you say, it enables one to handle surprise more readily.

"Thirdly, the story can be told in colloquial language, and not in literary language, which makes it, so it seems to me, more poignant. What experience I have had convinces me that the poignancy of life is invariably expressed by silences and by broken words. The French know so well how to use dashes, for instance.

"Fourthly, and this is not paradoxical, despite the colloquial language, one has a slight feeling of aloofness from the characters or sees them through the medium of a third person; and this, it seems to me, is the way one sees things in real life. . . .

"The story ordinarily comes to me as an incident or a theme, sometimes as a character in a certain incident. Then usually nothing happens for a long time. If I try to think about it too much, so much the worse. In about a month, I'll think about it again and then, as a rule, it begins to evolve. A great deal of the incident occurs to me while I am actually writing."—*Maxwell Struthers Burt.*

## MA'S PRETTIES

**GENERAL.** "Realism isn't popular—is it?" Half assertively this inquiry comes from a certain fiction writer. It is, perhaps, in proportion as the story has obvious significance. This sketch about "Ma's Pretties" reflects in miniature the whole of an American community, but in a manner which escapes him who seeks and appreciates only surface values. It is the kind of writing which acquires relative importance when placed alongside examples which reflect other communities, other nationalities.

The narrative is not a short-story, in the technical sense. Mr. Buzzell feels this to be no adverse criticism, since he says himself, "I am not particularly concerned about the short-story as such. I am using a short narrative form as a means of expression simply because this form seems the most natural to me. There are many things which I wish to record from my own particular slant. It is to accomplish this, rather than to produce short-stories, that I am writing. Naturally, then, I am not particularly concerned with the technique of the short-story, but on the other hand I am very much concerned with the technique of effective writing and have spent several years of hard work trying to perfect my craftsmanship."

**CLASSIFICATION.** A realistic sketch, with emphasis on the situation: Mrs. Brooks dies; her "pretties" are divided.

**THE CHARACTERS.** What is the chief method of the author for revealing character? How is the character of the dead woman indicated? What can you say of the

### 38 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

dialogue by way of indicating feeling over (1) "Ma's" illness, (2) her death? Describe the daughters.

THE MAIN SCENE. Is the story aptly entitled with respect to the main incident? What universal theme is struck in this well-developed scene between the girls in "Ma's" room?

"The things enumerated in 'Ma's Pretties' as found in her clothespress were part of the things my mother found in my grandmother's clothespress after the latter's death. I had to reject many items of course, and rearrange those which I selected as typical. You may be sure I spent a couple of weeks of hard work before I was satisfied with this piece of writing."—*Francis Buzzell*.

SUBORDINATE SCENES. Which scene do you regard as second in importance?

"The building up of the scene in which Ben Brooks carries the earrings in to 'Ma' was also a bit of conscious technique. I worked on that paragraph many hours before I was satisfied with the names of the flowers and had my tonal values right."—*Francis Buzzell*.

Compare this story with Donn Byrne's "The Wake." Apart from the narrative element, do you receive a decided impression of national contrast?

Study the list of "pretties," as you studied the list of objects, etc., in Miss Babcock's "The Excursion." Try to discover, here as there, their value in the reflection of reality. Certain small objects connote what larger objects? "Ma's" switch, for example? Apply this question to your consideration of each detail. Have these apparently insignificant details a value similar to that of synecdoche and metonymy?

## LONELY PLACES

**GENERAL.** A technically well-wrought piece of realism, both in its adherence to the point of view, and in the rationalization of events. When it was first published, it bore the (editorial) sub-title, "A Story of Woman's Inhumanity to Woman." "I assure you," says Mr. Buzzell, "that woman's inhumanity to woman never entered my mind in writing this story. If readers find a moral in any of my stories they can have it without question; I didn't put it there and I'll lay no claim to it." What does this statement indicate with regard to Mr. Buzzell's ideas of art?

**STARTING POINT, AND DEVELOPMENT.** "The beginning of a poem, I assume from my own experience, is a mood, a state of feeling, in the poet. He is stirred by something and sets to work to express it. Well, then, this is the way a story begins in me. As a result, the first tangible thing I have is the atmosphere. . . . I remembered that there were in Almont (Romeo) a number of 'grand' houses, standing far back from the road, and occupied by lonely women. I saw these houses buried in trees in summer, smelled the wild honeysuckle, watched the wrens flying in and out of the old teapots hung in the vines of the dining-room porch. In the winter I saw these houses buried in snow."

Mr. Buzzell then wondered why these women had never married and concluded that all the young men of their generation had gone to the city to work.

"The next step was to select a definite setting. For this I took an old house which I knew thoroughly — my Grandfather's house — the Orin Crisman house in 'Addie Erb and her Girl Lottie.' In this house I placed

a woman not quite forty years old and I named her Abbie Snover. Then I gave her Old Chris as a companion. I had reason for placing Old Chris in the house with Abbie aside from an actual plot requirement. I placed him there because I wanted to impress my reader in the beginning with the loneliness of Abbie Snover's environment rather than with her utter lack of companionship. The actual beginning of plot, I think, was when I decided to take Old Chris away from her at the end, so as to accentuate her loneliness. In searching for a cause that would remove the old man I decided to resort to gossip. The next question was how to start the gossip. It seemed most natural to have the children begin it. But how start the children? Abbie Snover and Old Chris had lived alone in that big house for fifteen years without any gossip; something would have to happen to start it. So I decided that Abbie would have to antagonize the children in some way. To be able to antagonize the children would necessarily require some kind of personal contact with them, so I had the children form a habit of going to her door after cookies. Then I invented the orange tree to give Abbie a reason for driving them out of the house.

"The rest was simple until I sent Abbie out of the big house on her journey to Mile Corners. It wasn't until I reached this point that I decided to let the reader know that Old Chris was dead; that Abbie's journey through the snow was to be a fruitless one; that fate had robbed her of her victory. If I had been concerned with writing just a short story I would have given my readers the desired surprise by withholding Old Chris's death from them until Abbie found it out. What I wanted to do was to make them feel Abbie's tragedy every step of the way along that country road."

The difference between the realist's and the romanticist's methods may be seen by a consideration of what a romanticist would have done at any stage of the action. For example, Abbie's kindness to the children



would have been the cause, not of her undoing, but rather (under other circumstances) of her rehabilitation. The business of the orange-tree, again, might have been used to turn the youngsters against her, as Mr. Buzzell has used it, but in this event then the sender of the orange tree would have arrived on the scene and by his masterfulness properly subdued the gossip. . . . Again, the romanticist would have saved the surprise, undoubtedly, for the reader as well as for Abbie. He would have desired to create the shock, and leave reflection to each reader.

Try telling the story from Mrs. Perry's angle.

What is the struggle? Is it active or passive, or does it pass from one to the other condition? Are the stages of the plot well-marked, from initial impulse to climax of action?

What is the atmosphere? What details of setting, character, and action harmonize in the totality of effect? What notes of contrast but serve to intensify the prevailing mood?

Has the author attempted to enlist the reader's sympathy for Abbie? Is his work finer and truer, as a result?

## THE WAKE

**GENERAL.** "The Wake" suggests and pictures the customs of the Irish following a death; at the same time it tells a story. For this latter reason it is superior, as a narrative, to "Supers," which emphasizes the picture, the condition. Emphasis is placed on the situation, with a gradual heightening of interest as to a suggested outcome. The young wife of an elderly husband lies dead; she has loved and been loved by a younger man; the younger man (Kennedy) has declared, "If anything ever happens to that girl at your side, Michael James, I'll murder you!" And now as Michael sits in dumb misery, he awaits the fulfillment of the threat. The passive situation is merged into the dramatic moment by the advent of Kennedy, who seeing the dead woman, foregoes his intention.

**SETTING.** The locale, according to Mr. Byrne, is Ulster, North Ireland. What is the length of the action?

**GERMINAL IDEA.** "I wished to write a story of an Irish wake which was neither utterly sordid, nor indelicately funny." Is the resultant mood, atmosphere, in harmony with this intention?

**THE ACTION.** Where is your interest first aroused? At what point does the principle of suspense operate to intensify interest? Is the dénouement satisfactory? Is the action that of a "triangle" story? Compare it, in this regard, with the action of "The Water-Hole." How is the love interest submerged in "The Wake"? How is the hostility Kennedy bears James overcome? What bearing on the action and on the theme has the blind misery of James?

**THE CHARACTERS.** From whose point of view is the story presented? Who is the main character and why? Is there in any way a suggestion that Death, as a character, controls? Or is the influence of the dead woman dominant?

**THE THEME.** In stating the theme, refer to the germinal idea and comment on the author's success.

Compare with this narrative, Chapter IX of Patrick MacGill's "The Rat-Pit." Mr. MacGill's setting is also in Ulster: Donegal.

It should be added for the benefit of the student who resents, or finds hampering, an insistence on short-story type, that Mr. Donn Byrne believes there isn't any such thing as the short-story. "A story is a story whether it's a novel of 100,000 words or a short magazine affair. There is no difference in technic between a 4,000 word writing, like 'The Wake' and any of my big 15,000 worders — 'Sargasso Sea,' for example, or 'A Treasure upon Earth.' Get a worth while idea and make your narrative interesting. That's the only formula for any piece of fiction. The short-story is to the novel what the chip mashie shot is to the full St. Andrew Swing, the same identical stroke used effectively for shorter distance."

Bring arguments to bear for or against Mr. Donn Byrne's statement. Be sure you have read widely before drawing conclusions, and have studied the technique of the stories and novels read.

## THE GREAT AUK

**SETTING.** The locale is New York City; the most important scene, in the Scudder Theater. The time is the present.

One of Irvin Cobb's most remarkable powers is that of picturing so vividly a setting that the reader cannot but read and cannot but remember. What is the explanation of this astonishing success? First of all, Mr. Cobb is a keen observer. When he is out with his wife, according to her he sees ten times more than she does, yet she thinks she is seeing all there is to see. "When he was writing 'The County Trot' Mrs. Cobb marveled at his life-like pictures of the Kentucky characters, all of whom he had really known. She asked him how it was possible for him to remember their faces and mannerisms after the lapse of so many years. He said: 'Why, I can close my eyes and see the knotholes that were in the fence around that fairground.'" This quotation indicates a second requisite—accurate memory. The third requisite is hard work, a condition through which Mr. Cobb believes all success must come. "When writing a story his object is to draw sharp pictures that will never leave the reader. To do this, he thinks out the minutest details of that picture, not that he will use those details, but that he himself may really see the picture as he writes." The fact that he will not "use all those details" which observation and memory have supplied means that he has the ability to select. And, finally, he knows how to handle an ample vocabulary.

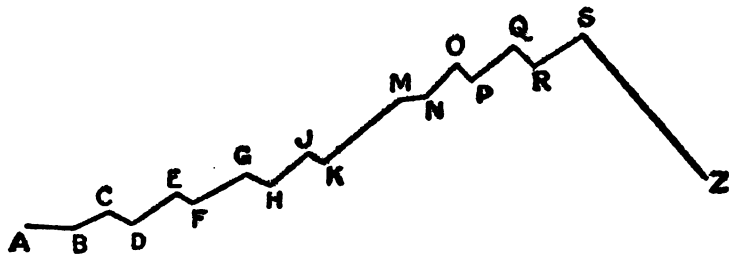
**PLOT.**

*Initial Impulse:* The need for a "grandfather" motivates the search of Verba and Offutt. (A

search, a type of "chase," serves for a strong story-backbone.)

*Steps to the Dramatic Climax:* 1. The cab-ride to Bateman's old haunts. 2. Finding the Scudder theatre closed. 3. The visit to the wine-shop; the clerk's account of Bateman. 4. The ragged boy volunteers information. 5. He leads them to the side entrance of the theatre, into the gloom and decay of which they make their way.

*Dramatic Climax:* The urchin whistles; the curtain rolls up; old Bateman appears. The search is now at an end. Bateman is found. The new cause of suspense lies in curiosity over ensuing events. To satisfy this curiosity, the author extends the dramatic climax moment. The whole scene at the theatre is a prolonged climax, gradually revealing the old man's unfitness, even as it soars to a higher emotional climax. The story structure may be roughly indicated by the diagram:



That is, if M represents the dramatic climax moment, then MS represents the dramatic climax scene, which is the period of Bateman's acting three parts. With S, comes the realization that Bateman is not in his "perfect mind." Notice the impeccable workmanship by which this recognition is forced home to Verba in the last speech of Bateman, the lines from "King Lear." SZ is the brief

## 46 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

drop to the climax of action. See the story for details.

*Climax of Action:* The two men leave Bateman taking his curtain call.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Why are the insignificant actors and actresses mentioned in the introduction? What is the particular literary value of Grainger? What outstanding characteristics has Bateman which none of the others possess? What value has the title in connection with the characters as a group?

How has Mr. Cobb individualized Verba and Offutt? To which means of characterization is he most partial — author's description, the character's own acts and speeches, or what others think and say of him?

Of the urchin who piloted the searchers, what is the first detail you recall? What other characters of Mr. Cobb do you remember from some physical peculiarity which he has emphasized?

Bateman is first presented to the reader through the opinion of Verba. Next, he is shown through the wine-shop clerk (who gives the effective clue as to Bateman's "dippiness"). Then, the ragged urchin volunteers his contribution. What prepossessing characteristic does the reader receive from him? Finally, the actor speaks for himself. One part would be insufficient; it would be "too easy"; therefore by the cumulative method Mr. Cobb lets the old man show beyond a doubt that he is not a type, but an actor. Dundreary, the Frenchman and King Lear require varied ability.

Notice that what the character *does* is the climactic portrayal — not what others say about him or what the author might portray.

**DETAILS.** Point out the clues to Bateman's insanity. Study Mr. Cobb's figures of speech. He frequently uses the human body as a basis for comparison (see, for example, page 85: "Its stucco facings, shining dimly like a row of teeth . . ." and page 97: "the

mouth of the place was muzzled with iron, like an Elizabethan shrew's"). Why is such a basis conducive to vividness for everybody?

What is the acting time of the story?

What is the significance of the contrast between the modern play, as represented in the selections (pages 88 and 89), and the masterpieces suggested in the latter part of the story.

Irvin Cobb never writes a story until he has worked it over in his own mind for a couple of months. At the same time, a hundred new ideas are developing; and as he himself says he will not live long enough to write all his stories. A year before he wrote "The Belled Buzzard" he was visiting with Mrs. Cobb at her old home in Georgia. They were sitting on a front porch one morning when a huge buzzard flew past. Mr. Cobb recalled a Southern story about a belled buzzard, and remarked that he guessed he would weave a plot round it. Just one year later, he finished the developing and wrote the story.

## BOYS WILL BE BOYS

**SETTING.** A town in Kentucky, with emphasis on Judge Priest's office and the court-room. Time: in recent years, not the immediate present.

**PLOT.**

*Initial Incident:* Judge Priest sends for Peep O'Day and informs him that he has inherited eight thousand pounds sterling.

*Steps to the Dramatic Climax:* Peep takes a silver dollar in advance from the Judge; he invests it in fruit, cake, and candy. He invites the boys to eat with him. The news of his fortune spreads, and eventually reaches Percy Dwyer in the work-house at Evansville, Indiana (this is the hint at an opposing force, the first suggestion of a struggle). O'Day begins to "betray the vagaries of a disordered intellect." He buys a child's wagon, soda-pop, etc. With the youngsters he spends a day in Bradshaw's woods, playing games. The day and his behavior are repeated.

*Dramatic Climax:* The apogee "came at the end of two months." It consists of three definite things:

- a. The arrival of the legacy,
- b. The arrival of the one-ring circus,
- c. The arrival of Nephew Dwyer.

*Steps to the Climax of Action:* Peep invests two hundred dollars and takes the youngsters to the circus. His nephew greets him at night; O'Day bids him a quick good-bye. The nephew goes to an attorney. Sublette addresses a petition to the Circuit Judge setting forth that O'Day is of unsound mind and that his nephew prays for the appoint-



ment of a curator over the estate. Judge Priest comes back from Reelfoot Lake. He talks with O'Day, and says that he may tell on the witness stand why he has spent the money as he has.

*Climax of Action:* Pages 120-124. O'Day's speech. The climax of action is extended here, as was the dramatic climax in "The Great Auk."

*Dénouement:* Judge Priest declares that the Court is advised as to O'Day's sanity; the youngsters applaud; the elders join in the applause; O'Day is, according to the Judge, "the sanest man in this entire jurisdiction." Court is adjourned. The Judge lingers to make a suggestion to the sheriff.

*Anti-Climax, and Close of the Narrative:* Peep brings to Judge Priest a present of all-day suckers.

CHARACTERIZATION. Judge Priest, who appears in many of Mr. Cobb's stories, is one of numerous types the author knew when he was a Paducah reporter. The student should study him as an example destined to literary permanence. In the opinion of the present critic he is the most representative figure in all the current literature about the South. No Southerner can fail to recognize the gentleman.

In this particular story how is the Judge described by the author? How does his mail help to characterize him? How does his behavior reveal him? For what qualities do you like him at first? For what throughout? (See especially pages 95, 117, 126.) For what, finally?

Study the description of O'Day. Study page 94 for the way Mr. Cobb makes O'Day appeal to the reader's sympathy. What in his past history has contributory value to the present picture and present plot? What in his environment? What do the townspeople think of him? What exceptions are there? What is his attitude to others? Study his behavior in connection with the reception of news about his fortune, his subsequent acts,

## 50 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

and his speech in the court-room. Why is his story of his early life of particular worth here? Note all the reasons for which you sympathize with him. Wherein, in brief, lies the human appeal of the story?

How are the minor characters hit off as individuals? How are they repressed so as not to usurp too much of the reader's attention?

DETAILS. Study the easy way in which the locality is kept before the reader. For example, the business about the water-melons is essentially Southern.

From reading "The Great Auk" what would you judge to have been one of Mr. Cobb's chief interests? What from reading "Boys Will Be Boys"?

Point out examples of this author's humor.

What value has the fact (page 87) that the Court of Appeals had affirmed a decision of the Judge?

What effects arise from the statement that Peep wore a four dollar suit?

What forecast lies in O'Day's admission of kinship to Dwyer? (Page 91.)

How has the author handled suspense in the first incident—the scene between the Judge and O'Day? Where does he satisfy curiosity? Is this, then, a minor climax of interest?

What reaction on the reader has O'Day's statement, "I can't neither read nor write"?

Note on page 100 the first indication that Peep's sanity may be suspected (Speech of Mr. Quarles). This question of his sanity joins Dwyer's interest in securing the money—a double force against Peep's retaining his fortune. Were you in doubt, on first reading, that O'Day would remain in possession? Is the struggle well developed as the essential foundation of the plot?

Is the dénouement satisfactory?

## CHAUTONVILLE

**CENTRAL IDEA.** The power of music is supreme.

**THE STRUGGLE.** The music-force opposed to the men's disinclination to charge. Is there any doubt that in singing the men "home" Chautonville turned them toward the enemy?

**THE SETTING.** What are the place and the time of the action? Point out details that keep war dominant.

**PRESENTATION.** Who is the narrator?

**CHARACTERS.** Who, specifically, is Chautonville? Why is the description of his voice put before his physical personality? Value of the contrast?

**DETAILS.** What determination of the narrator is used to create suspense? How is the determination overcome?

Try to recall other examples, in literature, of the power of music. Study its whimsical use in Kipling's "The Village That Voted the Earth Was Flat"; its use to recall the past in O. Henry's "The Church with an Overshot Wheel." See how it is employed in connection with the climax in Mary Synon's "The Wallaby Track," and in Kipling's "The Brushwood Boy."

What tonal values exist in the suggestion of sounds?

What relation exists between the rhythm and the theme?

Is the story pre-eminently one of theme, character, or setting?

## LAUGHTER

According to Mr. Dobie, "Laughter" was a work of the imagination in every detail. It had nowhere a starting point from reality, though — as he says — he now and then draws a character from life, such as that of Josef in "Four Saturdays," and he occasionally shapes an incident to the needs of the story, as he did in "The Failure." In "The Failure" and other stories, however, as in "Where the Road Forked," (*Harper's*, June, 1917), he states that the incident was really a mere pivot or peg on which he hung a cloak of almost pure imagination.

In regard to his maintaining his angle of narration so perfectly, he says this phase of his craft is rather instinctive. "Even before I became conscious of the force of a single point of view I somehow managed to achieve it without thinking about it at all."

**PLOT.** The story being a psychological study of a man who was untrue to himself and paid the penalty, one might expect to find a lack of external incident. Here the author accomplishes the difficult thing in that he has developed an outer action, which thus objectively exploits the mental processes.

*Initial Incident.* (Anticipated by the cumulative effect of the Italian's playing.) Suvaroff visits his next door neighbor to remonstrate against the accordion. He learns that the Italian fears death at the hands of Flavio Minetti, and he goes without stating the object of his visit. (Notice that the theme is struck in the Italian's reason for fear: he had *laughed* at Minetti.)

*Steps toward the Climax:* Suvaroff betrays to

Minetti the whereabouts of the Italian. Before he does so, Minetti warns him of the results of his so doing, thus preparing for the next period of the action. Minetti kills the Italian. Suvaroff sleeps. He goes to breakfast; he hears a man has been murdered. During the day he leaves the wine-shop where he plays the violin (a significant outer act reflecting his mental state). His mind wanders; he thinks he dreamed last night. Arriving at his rooms he finds the Italian's mother. She divulges that her son played to give pleasure to Suvaroff. Minetti enters and bestows money on the old woman. Suvaroff begs the hunchback, "Tell me in what fashion do these people laugh at you?" (This is a minor climax, one stage of the turning of Suvaroff's fortunes. But since he is not yet *able* to laugh, his life is in no danger from Minetti. Had he not laughed, he would have lived.) Minetti begs Suvaroff to go away; but he declares that he cannot. Suvaroff finds a squalid wine-shop where he sits watching the shadows. He finds he may learn to laugh at them, but not "at a man's soul." He buys a pistol. Minetti says he will never use it. He tells Minetti of the wine-shop pictures. While Suvaroff sits studying the pictures a new one appears.

*Dramatic Climax:* He laughs, then turns and sees Minetti.

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* Suvaroff goes home, undresses deliberately, and goes to bed — knowing he will sleep.

*Climax of Action:* He hears the steps pattering along the hall, and draws the bed-clothes higher.

*Dénouement:* Constructed by the reader, who has, however, no choice.

SETTING. San Francisco. "Fancy a novel about Chicago or Buffalo, let us say, or Nashville, Tennessee! There are just three big cities in the United States that

## 54 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

are 'story cities'—New York, of course, New Orleans, and, best of the lot, San Francisco."—Frank Norris is thus quoted by O. Henry at the beginning of "A Municipal Report," which (frequently proclaimed O. Henry's best story) has its setting in Nashville. How many of the stories in this collection have their settings in New York? in San Francisco? What other localities are represented? What do you conclude?

How has Mr. Dobie kept setting before the reader? Is it the same *city* as Mrs. Atherton uses in "The Sacrificial Altar"? Has it the same *atmosphere*?

CHARACTERIZATION. Are Suvaroff and Minetti "living" characters? Is Suvaroff, in the beginning, obsessed? Does the obsession culminate in monomania?

Minetti's physical self is given to the reader from Suvaroff's angle, which angle is consistently used throughout. What is Suvaroff's personal appearance? How do you account for your answer? Whose mental processes are *not* exploited? Why?

Why is the Italian's mother introduced as a background character?

DETAILS. The smaller features of the story reveal also the hand of the craftsman: the use of night, the wine-shop, ugliness, the shadows, and the arrangement of the steps to what seems an inevitable ending. "Seems"; for Mr. Dobie has a theory "that there is no such thing as an inevitable ending. Any opening situation may work out fifty ways." Is it possible, after certain steps in the action, to produce an ending other than inevitable?

How is the cold inflexibility of Minetti made convincing?

GENERAL. "In my days of apprenticeship," Mr. Dobie says, "I planned my story out in detail and did much re-writing. I think one must do this at the beginning. But if one finally evolves an unconscious technique which does away with a scenario I think it makes for more spontaneous writing. . . . But it is

dangerous to advise methods. My point in dwelling on the virtues of 'planless stories' is to encourage those who find their salvation along these lines and who are uncertain as to whether such a method will lead anywhere. . . . I started 'Laughter' in September, 1916, wrote about five pages, got stuck, put it away, dug it up three or four months later and in about three weeks carried it to a conclusion. . . ."

"It is rather hard to give a definition of a short story. I should say briefly that a short story is the reaction of a character or characters to a particular incident, circumstance or crisis. Obviously, as its name implies, there should be economy of line. Perhaps the shortest successful story on record is as follows:

'Three wise men of Gotham went to sea in a bowl.  
If the bowl had been stronger, my tale had been longer.'

"This narrative has also the virtue of suggestion: the greater the suggestion, the greater the story. In other words, a story is artistically successful in proportion to the collaboration exacted from the reader."

## THE OPEN WINDOW

To get the proper connection, the reader should first know "Laughter."

### PLOT.

*Initial Incident:* André Fernet meets the hunchback, Flavio Minetti, and learns that he knows something of Suvaroff's death. He is brought under Minetti's power of fascination.

*Steps toward Dramatic Climax:* Fernet's landlord, Pollitto, speaks of his vacant room. Fernet resolves to see Minetti again, and perhaps to learn who killed Suvaroff. They meet at the Hotel de France. Minetti says he was "expecting" Fernet. Fernet goes with Minetti, in spite of warning, to a wine shop. Minetti's suggestion that Fernet evidently wished to know who murdered Suvaroff is coupled with a warning that it is a "dreadful thing to share such a secret." But Fernet insists.

*Dramatic Climax:* Minetti says, "It was I who killed him," whereupon Fernet laughs. Notice that the dramatic climax, the laughter, falls early in this story, whereas in the former it arrives tardily. Is this logical, from the nature of the circumstances?

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* Minetti states that he kills every one who laughs at him. He prepares a *café royal*; Fernet is afraid, but makes a show of indifference or incredulity. In the morning, Fernet learns that his landlord has rented the room to Minetti; he thinks of going away but decides to stay and "see what happens." After some days, Minetti calls on Fernet. He says he has tried every slow way of murder except mental murder.



Fernet laughs, thus emphasizing the dramatic climax, but as Minetti says it does not matter, "You can die only once." His speech intensifies the dramatic forecast, already conveyed. Minetti supplies saccharine for the coffee; Fernet fears "slow poison," but nevertheless drinks, as if in a spirit of bravado, or unwillingness to seem afraid. Minetti harps on the idea that Fernet has laughed at him. Fernet's landlord comments on his haggard appearance. Fernet dreams. He stays away from his office, visits the library, and asks for all the works on poison. After dining alone, he meets Minetti, who persuades him to have a cup of coffee. Fernet speaks of his reading. He decides to go away tomorrow. On arriving at his room, he feels sick and is helped to bed by Minetti. He grows worse; Minetti attends him, and sends for the doctor. Upon the doctor's prescribing delicacies, Minetti prepares several which, in succession, Fernet refuses, and which he sees are thrown out of the window. At length he manages to tell the doctor that he is eating nothing, in spite of Minetti's assertion to the contrary. The doctor thinks Fernet insane. At the end of the week, even Minetti says he has eaten nothing. Fernet resolves, again, to go away tomorrow. But, still doing without food, he grows weaker.

*Climax of Action:* He dies, but not before he hears Minetti's laughter and the words: "Without any weapon save the mind!"

The *struggle* is well elaborated, as the preceding plot outline indicates, even though it is the one-sided bird-and-snake struggle, with a predetermined outcome.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Compare Fernet with Suvaroff. Which of the two offers the more difficult problem in psychology? Is it easy to believe that Fernet submitted

## 58 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

to the sway of Minetti? Why, for example, did he not go away?

Compare, also, the subordinate characters with those in "Laughter." What do most of them in this story think or feel about Minetti? How does the author indicate their attitudes?

DETAILS. Is the angle of narration similar to that in "Laughter"? What details appeal to the reader's gustatory sense? Study the symbolic use of the peppertree. Compare it with the cherry-tree in "Cruelties." What details of setting emphasize the locality?

## THE LOST PHOEBE

**STARTING POINT.** The beginning of this story lay in a bit about an insane man in Missouri, a story which came to Mr. Dreiser quite ten years before he developed it. The story quality testifies to the value of the long dormant period.

**SETTING.** Study the narrative, observing with respect to place that although you may feel you have your mind on the exact locality, it presently flits to another probable setting. This is because Mr. Dreiser attaches no importance to the locality of his short stories, so long as the incidents are American — and either urban or rural. The gain is, of course, in favor of the essential nationality; the loss is to the individual community. Does the first grasp of setting bring with it the atmosphere of the narrative?

**CLASSIFICATION.** A story of a search, at last successful. It may be classed, also, as a story of the supernatural, wherein the vision is one of a crazed brain. So beautifully has the author handled the fancy and the vision, however, that the reaction on the reader causes wonder as to whether sanity and insanity are not relative, or even interchangeable.

**PRESENTATION.** By the omniscient author, who exercises omniscience particularly over the mind of the main character.

**CHARACTERS.** Henry Reifsneider, Phoebe Ann (his wife), and background characters of the community folk. These last exist to give verisimilitude, for contrast, and as plot pivots. Cite an instance for each use.

**PLOT.**

*Initial Incident:* Phoebe dies.

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* Henry "sees" Phoebe until his mind gives way from brooding. He is possessed of a fixed idea: Phoebe left because he "reproached her for not leaving his pipe where he was accustomed to find it." He searches for her (immediate first steps given in detail) nearly seven years.

*Dramatic Climax:* He finds her.

*Steps to the Immediate Climax of Action:* He follows her to the edge of the cliff; he sees her below among the blooming apple trees.

*Climax of Action:* He leaps over the cliff.

*Dénouement:* He is found, a smile upon his lips.

**DETAILS.** Study the presentation of Henry, which gives so clear an impression of his unbalanced mind. Study the motivation for this insanity, the author's analysis of Henry's psychology, Henry's acts, and his speeches. What contributory effect has the *calling* for Phoebe?

Would you agree that atmosphere is the dominant element in the story? Is a supernatural story likely to be one of atmosphere? Why?

Study the way in which the author has made vivid the picture of the Reifsneider home. Observe the skill with which he has contrasted the dull, even sordid, realism of the actual setting with the beauty of Henry's visions. Why should the final one be the most beautiful? What color words do you find? How does color, or lack of it, aid in the unified effect?

Read Mr. Dreiser's "Free" (see volume bearing this title) and compare it with "The Lost Phoebe." Which do you regard as the more significant story?

## LA DERNIERE MOBILISATION

This is a sketch, wherein the mist, the fog, the forest, and the shadowy figures combine with the muffled sounds into a dim monotone. It is a picture galvanized into life. Notice that the narrative tense is not preferred.

The meaning of the sketch emerges in the last sentence. It is the *idea* which lends significance to the picture.

## THE EMPEROR OF ELAM

**CLASSIFICATION.** A novelette. The length (around 20,000 words), the many and rapid changes of scene, the shifting from character to character, the broken progress,—these are the outstanding characteristics not of the short-story but of a more leisurely type of fiction, one having a wider canvas, a larger significance.

### STUDY

#### I

What part of the quotation prefixed to the beginning does the story emphasize? Has the quotation an interpretative value, even a constructive value, for the story?

What is the locale? Does the author know his setting or has he fancied it? (Read his "Stamboul Nights.") Study the locale with a map at hand (preferably one showing both Turkey and Persia). With this map before you, note the scene of each phase of the action.

Do you follow easily the identities of the boats and passengers in Division I or is it necessary to study the situation?

What is the significance of the "translucent" look in Magin's eyes?

In the deck-house description why is attention drawn to the lion?

Why is so much space given to Gaston as early as page 4 of the story (page 150, Yearbook)? Do you, having read the story, think that Gaston is sufficiently played up to serve as the climax figure of the whole action? Are you satisfied that Matthews drop out of

the story so inconsequentially, after his earlier prominence?

What is the purpose of the echo —“ A bit of a lark!”

What dramatic value has the mention of the year 1914 (page 151)? How is emphasis given to the date?

What is the purpose of the first meeting? The showing of the treasure?

Why is the *dame de compagnie* mentioned, by way of climax, at the end of Division I?

## II

Significance of “ propelled their galley back ”?

Where is the city of Shuster? Notice its position with respect to the city of Dizful and the Persian Gulf.

Significance in the use of the German tongue (page 156)?

What is the purpose of the scene between Magin and Ganz? Its relation to the scene between Magin and the Englishman?

The “ coronation ” (page 158) refers to what? See also page 162.

“ Are you the Emperor of Elam? ” Who, by the suggestion, is?

Who is the Father of Swords?

Who is Magin, as revealed in part by the last paragraph of Division II? Has Mr. Dwight a fine sense of terminal emphasis?

## III

The scene shifts to Gaston and Matthews. After the dangers and difficulties of passage, the two reach Dizful.

Note the brief summary of the disposition of Gaston (page 161: So he packed off Gaston, etc.). Is it too casual?

Where has Bala-Bala been mentioned previously?

In the descriptions, pages 162, 163, 164, what is the dominant impression?

## 64 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

On page 166 the Father of Swords speaks of his friend Magin. Do you see the point of the allusions?

What is the meaning of the paper signed by Magin? Whose emissary is he?

What dramatic value has the last speech of Matthews in Division III? Why is it given the place of emphasis?

### IV

This division opens with the Father and Magin, at Bala-Bala. On the second page, however, it shifts to Matthews, at Dizful.

Notice that Matthews' interest in Dizful is crossed by the "Agent" of Magin.

What is the purpose of the scene at the beginning of which Magin presents himself at Matthews' gate?

Why did Magin glance at the make of Matthews' cigarettes?

Study the scene for the effective contrasts between the English and the German points of view.

Why does Magin try to bribe Matthews to go away?

Is the dramatic forecast at the end of this Division (IV) justified? Is it good, in itself?

### V

Notice the comparatively trivial manner in which Matthews is removed from the scene. The real cause for his going away is "a stupid war on the continent." This expression indicates that the cosmic significance of the war had not dawned upon Matthews.

Why did Matthews not pause to hear Magin play? Why is so much attention given to this playing?

What is the significance of the "Majesty" in Ganz's first speech, page 190?

Is the dramatic forecast (page 191) justified?—"What if . . . some little midshipman were to fire a shot across your bow?"



## VI

What artistry is there in the repetition of the meeting between the motor-boat and the barge?

Why is so much space given to the knife (page 192)?

What note is re-sounded in Gaston's remark (page 193) "Monsieur, you travel like an emperor!"?

What is the meaning of Gaston's speech (the last on page 195) regarding the object of virtue?

Why does Magin give his recent barge the slip and order Gaston to turn the motor-boat upstream?

What is the purpose of Gaston's long speech on page 199?

What idea enters Gaston's mind at the close of Division VI? Is it justified as dramatic forecast?

## VII

This final division is almost, in itself, a short-story, and with very little work on the author's part might have contributed to a brief narrative of decided power. At the end of so long a one, its value diminishes; for the dénouement is out of proportion, even out of line, with the beginning of the narrative.

What does the incident of Magin's finding the knife mean?

Study the struggle between the two men.

The superb climactic speech of Gaston compels admiration: "This at least I can do—for that great lady, far away."

The method of the novelist is again used, by way of epilogue, when the author turns to the peasant on the bluff.

## THE CITIZEN

**CLASSIFICATION.** A thematic story: dreams and ideals are the real power. The ideal citizen is also emphasized. Classed more directly, the work is a paean of patriotism.

**THE OUTER SETTING.** An audience of two thousand foreigners who have just been admitted to citizenship.

**THE CHARACTERS.** Ivan, Anna, his wife, and the speaker — the President of the United States.

How is the President characterized? How is Ivan contrasted with him? How related to him?

Has Anna real place in the action?

**THE PRESENTATION.** The real story is recounted after the climax has been implied. Ivan and Anna are here. One knows the Dream has been made real, and reads to see how it all came about.

**THE PLOT.** The dream of freedom, liberty, motivates Ivan's determination to come to America. He and Anna successfully struggle to save money for the voyage. The actual journey to America constitutes something of a struggle, in itself, for the poor ignorant peasants. But they are upheld by the dream, and are victorious.

**DETAILS.** Compare the episodes of the Russian police and the American police.

What can you say about the style as related to the theme?

## THE GAY OLD DOG

**CLASSIFICATION.** Miss Ferber recognizes the difficulties of boxing into the shorter form the material which would accommodate a larger space. "The tale of how Jo Hertz came to be a loop-hound should not be compressed within the limits of a short story. It should be told as are the photoplays, with frequent throw-backs and many cut-ins. To condense twenty-three years of a man's life into some five or six thousand words requires a verbal economy amounting to parsimony" (page 209).

She has, however, achieved the short-story effect in creating one dominant character,—in unifying the action, and in conserving one purpose.

**PROPORTION.** One of the greatest problems in developing the action of a story which covers twenty-three years is that of proportion. To hover over the "purple patches," to skip the unimportant stretches, and to link them all up in a coherent organization—this requires a sense of relative values. Why has the author developed the little scene at the death of Jo's mother? Why, that is, did she not merely leave a statement of the promise? Why is the rather full space (pages 210 ff.) given to the sisters? How, even in characterizing them, does the author keep Jo before the reader as the prominent character? "Which brings us to one Sunday in May" (page 213) indicates an episode of importance. How much time has, supposedly, been passed over? Why is this particular Sunday worked out in scene form? Why are the stages of Jo's and Emily's love passed over by leaps and bounds? Why is one brief paragraph,

## 68 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

only, given to the final disposition of Emily? Why is greater length comparatively taken up in the disposal of Eva and Babe and Carrie? How many years are covered in pages 219 and 220? Why is a fair amount of development placed on the gradual withdrawal of Eva and Babe?

Roughly, fifteen pages are given to the narrative so far (208-222), covering, say, twenty years. The remainder of the story (pages 222-233) covers about three years, or the period from the beginning of the war in 1914 to the time when America's first troops for France were leaving. What is the logic of this proportion with reference to the climax? to interest? to current events?

What does the scheme of the proportion, in short, emphasize?

**PLOT.** The struggle is between the individual, Jo Hertz, and the conditions of his life. The latter triumph, even though they leave the conquered one outwardly successful.

*Initial Incident:* Jo Hertz's promise to his dying mother.

*Main Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* Jo "takes care of the girls" for a number of years. At length, he falls in love with Emily. They wait three years. The "girls" are still unmarried. Emily and Jo part. Emily marries. (So passes the first minor climax.) Eva marries. Babe (Estelle) marries. Carrie takes a settlement job. Jo, free, finds that he does not even think of matrimony. The sisters fail to "marry him off." He is gradually left lonelier and lonelier. (The greatest depression of Jo's fortunes, financially, combines with his loneliness to intensify his deserted bachelor state.)

*Dramatic Climax:* The turning point in Jo's financial or external condition comes about through the War and the fact that leather goes up. Jo's fortune is made.

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* The "gay dog" business begins: Jo buys a car, he takes expensive apartments, he tries to solace himself with the friendship of a *demi-mondaine*. Eva sees him buying a hat for the woman; Estelle crosses them in a restaurant; Ethel, Eva's daughter, meets him in her company at the theatre. Eva and Estelle determine to visit Jo and call a halt. They drive to his apartment. Meantime Jo has been watching the boys marching, has come across Emily, has helped her to see her boy (Jo) march, and has told her good-bye.

*Climax of Action, and Dénouement:* The climax is dramatically worked out in the scene between the sisters and Jo. They flee terrified at Jo's counter-charges. "The game was over — the game he had been playing against loneliness and disappointment."

Draw a diagram to indicate the minor climaxes and other points of interest.

CHARACTERIZATION. What is the first picture the reader receives of Jo? Why is it given first? As related to the order of plot events, is it the *dénouement* picture?

How does Miss Ferber enlist the reader's sympathy for Jo at twenty-seven? How is his unselfishness displayed? Why is it more credible presented in the little scene-suggestions (pages 211, 212) than if affirmed by the author? How does his falling in love with Emily reveal his character? What trait is emphasized in his letting Emily go? What traits are responsible for his development as a loophole? Is he consistently developed? Does the story, through Jo, present a universal situation?

What traits of the girls, as a group, are contrasted with the dominant one of Jo? What ironic moral is visible, between the lines, in the *dénouement* on the respective advantages of selfishness and unselfishness?

## 70 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

How is each sister respectively individualized without requiring too much of the reader's interest?

What are Emily's most dominant characteristics? Is her portrait on pages 229 and 230 the fit successor to the earlier one?

Is there any objection to the names — Eva, Estelle, Emily, Ethel — used in the same story? Why?

DETAILS. To use Miss Ferber's own adoption of the photoplay term, "throw-backs," how many times has she reverted to preceding action? How many times, to note the counterpart of the throw-back, has she introduced an act or picture which has its chronological place later on? What is the dramatic value of having the sisters wait for Jo, to see him enter with red eyes, after which the author pauses to narrate the cause of his emotion (page 228)?

What double purpose has the author in describing Jo's bedroom (page 227)?

Point out striking examples of economy. An excellent one, for naturalness, suggestive power, and mere word-saving is to be found in the telephone message (page 225). Economy, in general, is also bound up with the operation of the excellent proportion.

What quality of style is most marked in Miss Ferber's stories? How is it achieved?

## BLIND VISION

### PLOT.

*Initial Incident:* Esmé attempts to fly to Brander, dying. Motivation for the incident lies in Esmé's friendship for Brander.

*Steps toward Dramatic Climax:* Esmé is attacked by a German plane; in the struggle the two planes fall inside the German lines. Esmé is tortured. At length, he consents to take up a photographer.

*Dramatic Climax:* Esmé throws out the photographer.

*Steps toward Climax of Action:* He arrives inside the lines of the allies. He tells his story to Marston, his friend, who shocked at Esmé's defection, declares him a murderer. Esmé, in turn, is appalled; he is unable to understand Marston's different code. Marston walks out of the tent.

*Climax of Action:* Esmé returns to the German lines, to "render a life for a life."

*Dénouement:* Marston finds Esmé's note. In a revulsion of feeling, he recognizes that he has failed his friend.

**PRESENTATION.** The story is told by Marston to a nurse, some time after the event. From Marston's point of view, therefore, the tale gains pathos, since his regret is still as unceasing as unavailing. Further, the method allows the reader a large share in constructing the story; and, best of all, by changing the chronological order of the events to the logical (they are also chronological as far as Marston is concerned), the author gains suspense. Reticence characterizes the handling of the uglier de-

tails, which every reader will fill in for himself. The enveloping action closes with the breaking of the wine-glass. (Compare query, page 34.)

**CHARACTERIZATION.** The tragic failure of friendship, in the struggle with conflicting ideals of honor, gives the story its poignancy. It belongs in the group, therefore, with "The Knight's Move," by Katherine Fullerton Gerould, and "Greater Love—," by Justus Miles Forman. If the ideal of the mental man is typified by his appearance and behavior, how well has Miss Freedley succeeded in the creation of Esmé and Marston? To what extent has she indicated the reaction in each after crucial moments? How far has she subdued the outer "I" narrator? If anticipated sympathy on her part motivates Marston's telling her the story, has the author justified the hypothesis?



## IMAGINATION

COMMENT. In "Imagination" the author has directed his skill toward revelation of character — a free revelation produced by subtle provocation. A man has reacted under a certain stimulus in a given way; under recollection of the incident, twenty years later, he reacts in a manner that intensifies and gives significance to his earlier behavior.

PLOT, then, is minified; situation is magnified. At his club, Orrington, literary adviser, is dining with the narrator and Reynolds, a popular writer. Orrington relates an incident of the day, about a story and its author: what might have been imagination proved to be fact — the author of the story was hungry. Orrington has found a job for him. The conflict, by virtue of which the story interest develops, lies in the opposing views of Orrington and Reynolds. The latter holds "It's a very great pity that young men without resources and settled employment try to make their way by writing." Orrington then cites the case of twenty years ago. On the very day that he, a young editor of a magazine on its uppers, was offered a "peach" of a job, he read a manuscript which seemed to indicate that the author might be starving. He surrendered his chance of the new position, recommending the author of the story. He has never received a line of thanks; he has often wondered how the man "got on." Incidentally, as an apparent by-product of his quixotism, his own stock began to rise from that time. Reynolds states, at the close of Orrington's story, that he was the author who had been given the "boost," and that he had been too busy writing the articles to send a note of thanks. He had

## 74 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

supposed that he was the recipient of a usual "tip." He declares, further, that he had not been in extremes, and that his story was solely the product of imagination. After he leaves the club, Orrington then reveals to the narrator: "Of course I knew. Later, of course, much later. The man who had hired him to do those articles bragged about it to me," etc.

The author has skilfully used the incident of the day to force out the larger incident wherein Reynolds figures. They are similar, and yet bear to one another a peculiar contrasting relation. The young man of Orrington's immediate experience had written from facts; there is a rather strong suggestion that he may amount to something. Reynolds had written from imagination; the whole characterization of his success, great as it seems, indicates that it is an "output," so much the worse for literature.

CHARACTERIZATION. "You add to my pleasure by bringing our friend"—what trait in Reynolds' character is announced in these first reported words? Follow the trait throughout the story as it is expressed in his speeches or acts; as it is suggested by the narrator, and by Orrington.

"In motion he resembles a hippopotamus" . . . "his rather dull eyes" . . . "his fat hand" . . . "shrugged his heavy shoulders" . . . "as if he had been some fat god of the Orient" . . . "Orrington goggled" . . . Study the portrait of Orrington pictured in these and similar strokes by the narrator, and notice the evidences of "contrast between his Falstaffian body and his nicely discriminating mind." What first ingratiates him with the reader?

Why is the first person the best one from whose angle to present the story? What is his function in the dramatic situation?

## THE KNIGHT'S MOVE

CLASSIFICATION. A "problem" story: the setting forth in the guise of fiction of this question, "Shall a man useful to society lay down his life for a social member far inferior to himself?" The problem is argued through the concrete instance, and by two characters.

SUMMARY OF THE INSTANCE. When the *Argentina* went down, Ferguson saved himself, rather than old Bronson or the Neapolitan peasant women and children. The world was the gainer by Ferguson's survival. Later, Ferguson loved and became engaged to a girl. One day as they were out walking, they saw a bandy-legged, sore-eyed youngster dash upon the railroad track in front of a train. Ferguson could just have saved the youngster at the cost of sacrificing himself, and although he alone knew this, he allowed the girl to understand that he had made a choice. She "rounded on him," and "spurned him in the grand manner." Ferguson, loving the girl, died. He probably committed suicide, not because he had changed his own views, but because of assuming the girl's view to be correct. "He couldn't have admitted in words that she was right, when he felt her so absolutely wrong; but he could make that magnificent silent act of faith."

PRESENTATION. Ferguson's story is given by Havelock to Chantry. Skill is evinced in so breaking the rehearsed narrative as to allow discussion at proper stages. The answers to the problem, supposed above, are in opposition. Herein lies the basis of the discussion, as of the struggle which Ferguson underwent.

Does the author in the presentation subtly convey her

## 76 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

own attitude on the question? What is it? How does it emerge in her characterization of the men? In the final sentence of the narrative?

**SETTING.** Why in the story of Ferguson does the author subdue setting? Why is the setting of the rehearsal emphasized?

Read in connection with "The Knight's Move," and for purposes of comparison, "Greater Love—" by Justus Miles Forman (*Harper's*, April, 1908).

## IN MAULMAIN FEVER-WARD

STARTING POINT AND FUNDAMENTAL PROCESSES.  
“The starting point for ‘In Maulmain Fever Ward’ is in the first four words of the tale: ‘Flood time on Salwin River.’ Flood time! Then the flowers are rioting, the traders are coming in and of course all things else follow.

“Of course, I’ve read Poe’s ‘Descent into the Maelstrom.’ Who has not? I do not believe that had anything to do with my use of the whirlpool in the story. The situation had been created; it was inevitable that the agent of the priesthood of Siva, most subtle of all in the whole world, would bring the two, or the girl, into the folds of the python. But where? Surely, the only place for this to happen was in the profundities of the whirlpool, traditional abode of the mother of all pythons of that whole region. Hence the necessity for the flood itself to climax the action, to form the whirlpool at its most tremendous phase, to take them down. I wasn’t thinking of Poe when I sent them down into the abyss. I went with them — and brought them out.

Did I know a person who had made a whirlpool descent? Yes; myself. A fearless swimmer in youth, I often dived under the swirls of falls and at the tails of rapids, looking up to admire the way the whirls refract light and to listen to the curious overtones the reverberations of the water take on, and the singing of the gravel as it churns ceaselessly.

... The superstitions — I call them the religious phases of the tale — are taken from the real life of those people. I could give you a map of the region, drawn to scale. And there’s a temple in a certain Karen town,

## 78 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

and in that temple a god with a necklace of human heads, or was, once in a way. (There never would be, however, a snake, I think, in a chest in a temple of Siva. Neither do they worship the snake, *per se*. They look upon it as one of the agencies by which the Destroyer works and will not even kill a snake that gets into a house or bed.) When I say Karen town, there are many, for the Karens are a race and have many towns. Of course, I didn't specify which one I meant in the story. And I guess there isn't such a whale-swallowing whirlpool in that gorge, but I needed one right there and what a fellow needs in fiction, he takes."—*George Gilbert*.

**PLOT.** An excellent construction, the framework reveals only one or two crudities to the eye of the critic. The author has motivated every act, which is followed by a logical effect; and in the presentation of the story, he has chosen the order best calculated to win the reader's interest, curiosity, feeling of suspense, and finally of satisfaction.

*Initial Impulse:* Pra Oom Bwhat invites the man who calls himself Paul Brandon to visit the temples of Karen. (Motivation: He hopes Brandon will free Nagy N'Yang. Where, in the story, does the reader learn this motivation?)

*Steps toward Minor Dramatic Climax:* Paul loves Nagy N'Yang; she will prove to him why it is folly. (Follows the capital temple scene.) It is clear that she belongs to Siva. She leaves the temple. Paul learns that she is married, but has been claimed by the priests on her wedding day. He makes known the conditions on which she will be freed. The priest threatens: "I can call her back or kill her" . . . Paul crushes the cobra, thereby drawing upon himself the curse of the priest.

*Minor Dramatic Climax:* He takes Nagy N'Yang away. In the first struggle, Paul has been successful, but has unwittingly incurred the enmity of Pra

Oom Bwhat. This enmity motivates a deferred major dramatic climax.

*Steps toward Major Dramatic Climax:* Nagy N'Yang tattoos Paul's head with the mark of Siva. (What is her reason?) Pra Oom Bwhat arrives. (How does the author apparently motivate his entry upon the scene? At what point in the narrative does his real motive become known?) Nagy N'Yang is afraid. (Does the reader guess why?) The rains come. Pra Oom Bwhat wears an air of mystery. Ali Beg presents Paul with a throwing knife. (Thrilling dramatic forecast.) The stream roars; flood-tide approaches. (A fine harmony, in that the dramatic climax approaches with it.) Pra Oom Bwhat presents Nagy N'Yang with a gift. (What is the effect on the reader, who is at the moment ignorant of the real nature of the gift?) He asks her to walk apart. Paul supposing he is Nagy N'Yang's "brother" permits them to go together. The succeeding steps, not immediately presented, are these: Pra Oom Bwhat binds Nagy N'Yang to a teak log and leaves her to be swept down the whirlpool. He returns to kill Paul, but in the struggle, or

*Dramatic Climax* (the real turning point), Paul kills him with Ali Beg's throwing knife. Before he dies Pra Oom Bwhat lays the curse of Siva upon Paul. This curse motivates, then, further steps in the action.

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* Paul rushes out to rescue Nagy N'Yang, but finds that the teak log, bearing its dark burden, has swung farther out. He notices the chest and momentarily hoping it may be a boat lays hands on it. As he raises the lid, the giant python glides out and disappears at the river brink. (Here is an obvious manipulation, although the average reader will lose sight of the management. Is it likely that Paul would have tarried to

open the chest?) Paul then swims to the log and crawls upon it just before it takes the whirlpool plunge. In the bottom the python coils about the trunk and Paul. As they emerge, Paul contrives to kill the python with Ali Beg's knife which he has taken from the dead body of Pra Oom Bwhat, but not before the snake has given him the glancing blow on the brow, over the tattoo mark. Ali Beg finds Paul and Nagy N'Yang, unconscious, and takes them to the hospital. Paul tells the story, himself learning from the nurse the detail just stated.

*Dénouement:* He receives the scale from the python and burns it over the night taper, so removing the spell. He learns that Ali Beg and Nagy N'Yang are with him, and says he and Nagy will not go up-country again.

**THE NARRATOR.** The first person is preferable; for since Paul learns but tardily certain steps of the complication, the reader (who knows only what Paul knows) must remain in suspense. Try telling the story from an objective point of view, placing every step in its chronological order. What does the story lose?

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Compare the characteristics of these Oriental figures with those in "A Simple Act of Piety." What have they in common? Why does Mr. Gilbert choose a half-breed as his narrator and hero? Point out every example of Paul's fearlessness. Why does he not appear conceited or egotistical, as the first person narrator is in danger of seeming? What is Pra Oom Bwhat's distinguishing trait? Point out all examples of his duplicity; of his religious or superstitious nature.

Show that love, in one guise or another, largely motivates every stage of the action, with certain exceptions, which result from thwarted love. To what extent does religion motivate the acts?



Is the python a "character"? What is Nagy N'Yang's chief rôle? Is Ali Beg's part too obvious?

LOCAL COLOR. Why and how does the author emphasize the setting in the first paragraph? Where is the snake *motif* introduced? Trace its progress, not only for its plot value, but for its contribution to the reader's realization of setting. Where are the rains first mentioned? What inanimate objects contribute to the local color? What customs? What beliefs? Is the story primarily one of setting, plot, or character; or have the elements been harmonized into an evenly balanced narrative?

ATMOSPHERE. Is the mood or "feel" of the story a trifle too near melodrama? What phases of the action, if any, would you subdue?

DETAILS. "Take away the medicine" (third paragraph). Does this indication that a sick person is the narrator surprise you? If so, is the technique sound?

Why are the details of Paul's courtship left to the reader?

Is the fight between Paul and Pra Oom Bwhat presented economically? convincingly?

Good dramatic moments are found in such passages as those wherein the noise in the chest is indicated *immediately* after Paul says he would seek the way of love; in the stirring *immediately* after Paul says, "I can kill the snake"; in Paul's crushing the cobra and so drawing an immediate curse, etc. Point out several other examples.

Make a list of the struggles in order as they occurred.

What are the three main settings or scenes?

Does the happy dénouement convince you?

#### AUTHOR'S CONCEPT OF THE TERM SHORT-STORY

"No mere relation of harmonized incidents, no recurrent crises, can make a short story. There must be an inner voice. To explain my meaning: I do not count

## 82 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

Chekhov's 'The Darling' a short story. It is a fine character sketch. It has a beginning, a very fine working out, but it gets nowhere. Three-fourths of the Russian short stories, so-called, are not stories at all. They are sketches, narrations of incidents. They are like a song, finely wrought, but with no dominant chord to resolve them into a real end."— *George Gilbert*.

## A JURY OF HER PEERS

**TITLE.** The intimate relation between the one-act play and the short-story may be seen in the fact that the narrative here told has its dramatic counterpart in the stage production entitled "Trifles." The latter was presented in the season of 1916-1917 in New York City. What is the excellence of each title?

**GERMINAL IDEA.** "A long time ago, when I was a reporter in Iowa, I went to the house of a woman who was being held for murder, and while the circumstances were not at all those of 'Trifles,' it was out of that experience the play grew."—*Susan Glaspell.*

**FACTS OF THE PLOT.** Minnie Foster marries John Wright. Basis for trouble lies in the fact that Minnie is a lively girl, with a love for color and action, while John is a hard man, and "like a raw wind that gets to the bone." They have no children, and as the years go by, Minnie is more and more lonely. The neighbor women leave her to herself; her isolation is pronounced. At length, after many years, she comforts herself with a caged bird. In a fit of rage, John wrings the bird's neck. Minnie, half-crazed, lays aside the body of the bird in her sewing basket. Shortly after, while her husband is asleep, she strangles him to death with a rope. The next morning, she explains to a passing neighbor, who drops in on a business visit, that John has been strangled by "somebody"; that she is a sound sleeper, and sleeps on the "inside" of the bed. The neighbor notifies the sheriff. Minnie is taken to prison. The next day, the sheriff, Peters, with his wife and the district attorney go out to the Wright place to make an examination. Hale, a neighbor, and Mrs. Hale are with them. The

## 84 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

men seek a cause, a motive, for the killing of Wright, but find nothing. While they are making large and futile observations, however, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters discover the dead bird and other evidence. With awakened understandings, the women conceal the evidence — Martha Hale takes the bird away in her pocket.

MANAGEMENT OF THE FACTS — THE DEVELOPED PLOT. The most noteworthy and striking management lies in corraling the whole story into one "cold March morning," and only part of that. Unity of setting, the Wright home, is a less difficult achievement. Notice that the story *introduction* calls up a setting outside the Wright home, whereas the play ("Trifles") used only the kitchen at the Wrights'. Which is better for intensification?

The chronological order of the plot is rearranged for artistic purposes and for interest. The author begins at the point of the visit to the empty house by the sheriff's party.

To understand thoroughly, the difference between the order of plot presentation and the order of chronological growth, make out a list of the details as you gather them from the story progress. Then compare them with the "Facts of the Plot," set forth above.

STORY PRESENTATION. The narrative is given to the reader according to the detective story method. Martha Hale's point of view is used at the start, after which the dramatic method is employed, the spot-light shifting from one woman to another, occasionally lighting on the men, but lingering most often on Martha Hale. Why is she the best one through whom the reader may understand the entire situation?

Where do you first feel yourself responding to a sense of mystery? How does the author convey this? What is the effect in the first paragraph of these words? — "It was no ordinary thing that called her away," etc.

Observe the little apology (bottom of page 258) by which the author has kept the search delayed until the

second day, after Minnie has been taken away. Why is the latter accomplishment a plot necessity?

What contributory worth has the emphasis (page 259) on Mrs. Hale's Harry? . . . How is it used to effect contrast?

Pages 260 and 261 in effect convey a rehearsal; but they have dramatic worth also. Why? (Note that Minnie's speeches are quoted, not summarized.) See following pages for similar dramatic accomplishment.

Study the natural way in which Hale and Peters are pushed off the stage (page 263), leaving the women together with the attorney. Purpose of his remaining a moment?

Observe the care with which every important detail of the plot is *motivated*.

Study the scene wherein the women, with an eye for little things, arrive at the truth. Is their solution stated, or is it suggested?

What do you deduce from the stove with the broken lining? From the crazy stitches in the sewing? From the bird-cage of the broken hinge?

What double meaning lies in the concluding sentence, "We call it — knot it, Mr. Henderson"?

SETTING. Has the actual setting an influence on the characters with respect to the story action? How is the setting given in the finished narrative? How is it connected with the theme?

CHARACTERS. Make a list of the characters and state the reason for the existence of each with regard to the action, to the verisimilitude, and to the need for contrast. It is a difficult thing to focus clearly before the reader a character who never "comes on the stage." Has Miss Glaspell succeeded in evoking for you the person and the individuality of Minnie Wright?

Does one desire in a story of this nature *types* or *individuals*? Which character should be most individual, here, as regards the author's purpose?

## THE SILENT INFARE

STARTING POINT. "Most of my dialect stories have some basis of fact in their incidents," says Mr. Gordon, "and in them I have sought to depict phases of the life and characteristics of the negroes whom I grew up among as a boy, and have known more or less intimately since.

"'The Silent Infare' was a real occurrence, as was the pillow episode in 'Mr. Bolster'; and the story of 'Sinjinn Surviving,' in *Harper's Magazine*, is in its main features true. Nearly all, if not all, of the stories in the 'Ommirandy' book had some foundation of fact, and the characters are amplified portraitures of 'darkeys I have known.'"

CLASSIFICATION. Not a short-story, in the limited sense of the term, but an interesting reflection of life in the story that is short. The action is not all directed toward one end; the main episode is almost incidental in the casualness of its occurrence—as incidents occur in life;—character is the connecting link between the earlier and the later stages of the narrative phases. Incidental action contributes, rather to character than to action; *e.g.*, the business of the guinea nest is a high light on Ommirandy, on the boy, Tibe, and on the mistress of the house, whereas it has only slight suggestive value for the plot. Emphasis on the nest at the close emphasizes the realistic qualities of the story.

The method of the author shows that he is "a born story-teller." He has an appreciation of the life about him, he has the gift of literary expression, and he writes perfect dialect. Interested in larger literary worth, he can afford to disregard the technicalities of the short-

story — which may be, or may not be, a very well executed piece of work and still fall short of permanent excellence.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Who is the main figure? What pictures of herself do her own speeches contribute? How does her attitude toward Mis' Nancy emphasize the portrait? Mis' Nancy's relations with her emphasize what qualities? Does the author's own comment help the reader to an appreciation of Ommirandy? Where?

Give several examples of contrast and comparison noticed in your studying the portrayal of the various figures.

**PLOT.** Studying the leisurely progress of the story, should you pronounce it a growth or a construction? Is there a struggle? Is the main incident presented in its chronological order? How is it enhanced by being given through the words of Ommirandy, rather than from her point of view, as she looked through "de winder over de kitchen do'," but in the words of the author?

**SETTING.** What is the locale? Measuring the "local color story" by the dictum that it could have its action nowhere except in the time and place indicated, would you agree that this is a story of local color? What other Virginian has used similar scenes? What stories akin to this, in regard to the value of setting, do you find in Mr. O'Brien's collections?

Mr. Gordon once said in a letter to Rudyard Kipling, so he states, that he regarded as the four best stories in the English language, "Wandering Willie's Tale" (In "Redgauntlet"), Bret Harte's "The Luck of Roaring Camp," George W. Cable's "Posson Jone," and Kipling's "The Man Who Was." In which of the four is the element of setting foremost?

**GENERAL METHOD.** "If I should venture to say anything about the writing of a short story it would be this: the first consideration is that the writer must have a short story to tell; and the second consideration that, after

## 88 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

having learned by long and constant practice to write clear and vigorous English, he must tell the story naturally, after his own fashion. No one else's fashion will do."

This explicit statement of Mr. Gordon should be considered by every would-be writer of stories. Notice that he does not say nothing can be learned from reading other stories, or from studying their mechanism. Would his own stories be what they are if a long line of American writers had not preceded him? Would Shakespeare have written his dramas if his immediate predecessors and contemporaries had not lived? In another age, when another literary *genre* was foremost, Shakespeare would have foresworn drama for the prevailing style.



## THE CAT OF THE CANE-BRAKE

**STARTING POINT.** Frederick Stuart Greene wrote this story out of his experiences and observations as an engineer in certain Southern districts. The pine woods, the wretched cabin, the cane-brake, the rattlesnake, the brogan shoes—these are concrete instances of his familiarity with the setting. The immediate germinal idea lies in an incident he recalled of seeing a severed rattlesnake head fastened to the leg of a man in camp.

**PLOT.** The compactly wrought plot is one of the best in recent fiction. It is formed, in the main, from the interweaving of two lines of interest. One has to do with the struggle between the yellow cat and the woman, Sally; the other spins out the sordid love affair between Sally and the young engineer. The climax of action shows a double defeat for the woman. The husband is the connecting link, as he is the third figure in the triangle story, and is the partisan of the cat in the other line of interest.

*Initial Impulse:* Sally throws the stick of wood at the cat. Outward indication of latent animosity.

*Steps in the Action:* Sally promises her lover to meet him at midnight. She prepares the liquor-trap. She hears of the big snake. She insists that the cat be killed. Jim refuses. He orders her to lay the mattress in the "dog-trot." She sets the liquor-trap. Jim, caught, drinks a toast to the cat. Sally lies waiting for midnight.

*Dramatic Climax:* The cat finds the snake-head. It passes the bed. Sally mutters and strikes out in her sleep. The cat drops the snake-head.

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* Few, but

## 90 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

significant. Sally wakes, raises herself on her right palm; her wrist meets the fangs of the rattler; in agony she tries to wake Jim for help, but he lies in a drunken stupor. Meantime, the young engineer who has waited long, now sets out to reconnoitre. He makes his way toward the cabin.

*Dénouement:* In it is bound up the climax of action which has, in part, already occurred in Sally's death. The engineer sees the dead woman, the drunken man, and the purring cat. He flees.

Apart from the clever workmanship of the plot construction, what examples of poetic justice do you find?

Was it fate, chance, or tactics of hate which caused the cat to drop the snake-head?

**CHARACTERIZATION.** In a story of plot prominence, the characters need less individualization. Are these, in your opinion, types or individuals? Which is the best drawn? Which the least convincing? How does Sally, early in the action, forfeit your sympathy?

**DETAILS.** How is Jim's love for liquor (a hinge on which the plot is made to turn) prepared for early in the action?

How does the manner of the cat's disposition of the fish-head make logical its subsequent interest in the snake-head?

What intensifying value has the "sad, gray moss"?

What effect has Sally's second encounter with the cat?

Study the naturalness, the dramatic development, and the enriching quality of the scene wherein the rattlesnake is discussed. How does it make plausible, also, the fact that the cat found the snake-head?

What contribution is made to the final effect in Jim's toast to the cat?

What do you think of the final sentence by way of conclusion?

What is the length of the action?

This story, the first Mr. Greene wrote, after taking up the study of story technique, is particularly excellent for showing early recognition of plot demands. If its structure is, on investigation, a trifle obvious, it will be all the better for the student's purpose. On comparing it with later stories by the same author, he will find that growth which means ability to conceal mechanism — or to forget it altogether.

The student needing exercise in plot construction should read Captain Greene's "Molly McGuire, Fourteen" (*Century*, September, 1917; also reprinted in "A Book of Short Stories," edited by Blanche Colton Williams), and should study his diagram of the lines of interest and their complications (See "A Handbook on Story Writing," by Blanche Colton Williams, page 94).

significant. Sally wrote, after taking palm; her wrist movement is particularly excellent agony she tries to plot demands. If its in a drunken stupor, it will be trifle obvious, it will be gineer who has waited purpose. On comparing noire. He makes himself author, he will find that

*Dénouement*: In conceal mechanism — or action which has, in

death. The engineer in plot construction drunken man, and Molly McGuire, Four-

Apart from the construction, what find? 7; also reprinted in "A ed by Blanche Colton

Was it fate, chance diagram of the lines of (See "A Handbook on the cat to drop the Colton Williams, page 94).

**CHARACTERIZATION.** I the characters need less in your opinion, types or is drawn? Which the least early in the action, forfe

**DETAILS.** How is Jim which the plot is made the action?

How does the manner fish-head make logical snake-head?

What intensifying value

What effect has Sally's

Study the naturalness, the enriching quality of snake is discussed. How the fact that the cat found

What contribution is it toast to the cat?

What do you think of the conclusion?

What is the length of

After the hardship of the struggle, comes the period of rest. See page 305, "At five o'clock a Port Eads pilot climbed over the side," etc.

*Dénouement:* The *dénouement* reveals a relationship which may be, or not be, a surprise to the reader. Does it matter whether the surprise exists? To what conclusion does your answer point in regard to the value of a "surprise ending"?

Is the *dénouement* satisfactory?

Did you learn from the clues in the first scene, between Larry and Mary, more than the author intended?

Wherein do you find the preparation for the accident which does for Larry? (See pages 289 and 290.)

What is the worth of the minor climax, page 295, where the two struggles reach corresponding points?

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Make note of all the devices and methods by which the author draws sympathy to Larry. Show that the emotional reaction you experience arises directly from the concept of his character and his acts.

What are the dominant traits of Dan? What is the purpose of the scene wherein Dan knocks out the stoker?

Originally, Mr. Greene called his character, Dan, by the name of Mike. Why did he accept the advised change?

Is the personality of Mary properly subdued? properly elevated? In connection with your answer, notice the value of having her introduced early in the action.

Who are the background characters? Do they usurp too much of your interest?

**DETAILS.** What is the length of the action?

Is the business on pages 297 and 298 too technical for a layman's comprehension? If so, can one, nevertheless, apprehend sufficiently to derive pleasure from the

## 94 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

recountal? To what effect do the various mechanical appliances and parts contribute?

Study all the details by which Mr. Greene has conveyed the *feeling* of the big storm. Where is the first preparation for the fact that the incidents of this story will be connected with the time of the Galveston Flood?

How did Larry receive the appellation of The Bunker Mouse? Why is the episode told out of its chronological place? Are any other important incidents presented out of their time order?

From whose angle is the story told?

Intensifying worth of the sentence?—"So's a trout; but it's got a damn poor show against a shark" (page 289).

Reason for this statement of the author?—"I wanted to say that Dan purred like a tiger, but it was a jungle figure, and of course I had to give it up."

Point out instances of the author's keeping the reader aware of locality.

Show how the mood or feeling is harmonized with the plot, which is itself one of complication wherein the stages of the two main struggles are kept beautifully parallel.

## WHOSE DOG—?

**CLASSIFICATION.** This seven or eight hundred word short-story illustrates the extreme type. The setting is the end of a pier; the time, only a few minutes; the action represents a crisis in the life of one character, the village drunkard; the struggle—which culminates in the suicide of the drunkard—is between him and society. The unities are, therefore, well conserved; the singleness of effect is pronounced. It is a *tour de force* in its manipulation of story elements.

Is the motivation for John's suicide sufficient?

What social relation does the policeman bear to the drunkard? What contrast does the author employ?

**THEMATIC VALUE.** Society is not arraigned: a case is posed. Has it propaganda value?

## MAKING PORT

**COMMENT.** A capital example of a short-story built on two lines of interest neatly joined. One line arises from the desire of Old Tom to reach Liverpool; it illustrates a passive struggle between wishing and waiting on the one hand, and fate or chance on the other. The second line arises from the situation of Spike's being in prison, a situation motivated or brought about by the physical struggle between Spike and the bo'sun, and is marked by Spike's attempt to escape. The two lines are connected by the fact that Tom has a queer animosity for Spike, and that he is made the guardian of Spike. Old Tom's relation to his wife offers a parallel to the relation between Spike and the mission girl. Old Tom is unsuccessful, ironically so; Spike escapes.

Is the motivation for Tom's surrendering the keys of Spike's prison strong enough? What is it?

**PLOT.**

*Initial Incident:* Spike kills the bo'sun.

*Steps to Dramatic Climax:* Spike is chained in the locker. Tom is given the key. Tom is tempted to give up the key. He refuses, hearing that the ship will go on to Liverpool, knowing moreover that if he betrays his duty his chance will be lost. After four months the ship comes to anchor. Meantime Spike has filed his chains. The girl comes on board. She beseeches Old Tom to let him go.

*Dramatic Climax:* "Take him."

*Steps to Climax of Action:* The escape in the



mission boat to the tramp steamer. Spike gets aboard.

*Dénouement:* Tom must remain here. Irony in the understanding that the tramp is bound for Liverpool.

**PRESENTATION.** Who tells the story? Has he any part in the action? How does the narrator bridge over the long passage so as to secure emphasis on the story action?

**CHARACTERIZATION.** How many times does the narrator refer to Old Tom's scratching his ribs? Is the repetition of an act, emphasis on a habit, a sound method of character delineation? Is it too "easy"?

What idea do you form of Tom from his speeches?

How does his animosity to Spike serve to portray him?

By what means does the narrator elicit from the reader sympathy for Spike? How does he hold it?

Study the picture and the character of the mission girl.

**ATMOSPHERE.** Try to define the mood or feeling of the narrative. What influence has Fate in creating the atmosphere? Study the contribution toward the atmosphere in the dramatic forecast on page 165. How is this forecast properly subdued? Has the superstition of sailors a dramatic value? How is the setting made contributory to the atmosphere?

## RAINBOW PETE

**SETTING.** Mushrat Portage. The setting is of unusual importance, since nowhere else, probably, would the action be possible.

**CHARACTERS.** The woman employed at Scarecrow Charlie's; Rainbow Pete; Pal Yachy; minor persons. Who is the narrator? Has he an acting part in the story?

### **PLOT.**

*Initial Incident:* Rainbow Pete and the woman are married.

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* Mushrat is disappointed at Pete's silence. He goes away, after a time, to the North, "dreaming of gold." The woman, his wife, becomes head of Charlie's establishment. The town booms. Pal Yachy arrives. He sings. Pete's wife lured by the voice fears she may be untrue to Pete if he does not hasten to return. Pal Yachy offers a prize for the first child born on Mushrat.

*Dramatic Climax:* Pete returns. (See the scene in the eating place.)

*Steps to Dénouement:* He hears Pal Yachy singing to his wife. Outside of the cabin, he sees the singer near his wife, with the gold prize. The wife of Pete flings the gold clear of the bed. Pete enters; throws out Pal Yachy, and the gold after him.

*Dénouement:* Pete discovers his son. Pal Yachy goes, leaving the family united.

**DETAILS.** Does the explanation of Rainbow Pete's

name tie itself up with a clue to the final action? (See page 310.)

Study the story for the musical effects: Pete's flute, Pal Yachy's singing.

Is there a resemblance in any way to the opera, "Pagliacci"? Is the result of the voice similar to the effect of Chautonville's singing? Are there other instances of the power of music superior to the one of the sirens?

What suggestion is bound up with the idea, "Gold lies at the foot of the rainbow"? Has the author handled it skillfully?

Compare this story with film productions, which you have doubtless seen, of the North Country. Wherein lies the popular success of such photoplays as those in which William S. Hart appears?

With Rainbow Pete's point of vantage outside his cabin, compare that which the narrator enjoys in "Ching, Ching, Chinaman," when he looks under the window-shade into the room (Page 455, Yearbook, 1917). Has Ommirandy a similar good post? (See "The Silent Infare.") Find other instances. What contribution does such a physical point of view make toward the vividness of the picture?

## LIFE

**COMMENT.** A student of the present critic made this comment on "Life." Do you agree with it?—"The opposing forces are the man's desire to know the meaning of life, and the darkness of his vision. It is hard to say which force wins. For though he does not discover the meaning of life, he discovers a simile sufficiently revolting to suit his mood. . . . It is really a single incident, made worthy of expansion by its significance and symbolism." . . .

Get the final implication which completes the story. In short, what is the final sentence when rounded out?

Read "The Workman," by Lord Dunsany (in "Fifty-one Tales") and compare it with this narrative for atmosphere and philosophy.

## THE FATHER'S HAND

GERMINAL IDEA. "What started 'The Father's Hand' was the quotation from the fifth, no, the sixth, book of the *Æneid*,

*Bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro  
Bis patriæ cecidere manus.*

I happened to have been reading it the day before. Then I could not go to sleep the next night, and it occurred to me that the lines were perhaps the most touching I knew, and that they were an example of the modernity or rather the timelessness of all art. Then I tried to imagine a situation today that they would fit, and the whole story was worked out before morning. My own reaction about it is that I have stolen Vergil's thunder."—*George Humphrey.*

PLOT.

*Initial Incident:* In the first few months of the war there comes to a small English village a refugee from Alsace-Lorraine, a monument carver.

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* He refuses to go into shelter from the frequent air-raids and learns from watching the planes that they pass a certain point before turning toward London.

*Dramatic Climax:* Acting upon his information the gunners bring down a German plane.

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* The carver finds himself a hero. It is decided to erect a tombstone over the dead aviator, with the inscription "Here lies a fallen German." The stone-cutter is deputed to carve the inscription. The relics of the

raid are exposed for view in the little museum. The personal effects of the aviator consist largely of a young, fair-haired woman — "Meine Mutter." The stone-cutter goes out to buy a chisel and to visit the museum. On his return he seems ill but goes to work on the inscription.

*Climax of Action:* He dies before completing the epitaph.

*Dénouement:* The dead aviator was his son, as the picture had revealed to him, and as the unfinished inscription, "Bis patriæ m —," revealed to the Dean.

**PRESENTATION.** Mr. Humphrey has seen fit to present this tale as a rehearsed one. In so doing, he has secured mellowness — consistent with utmost economy, sympathy for the stone-cutter, and an excellent apology for the Latin phrases. He evidently had in mind, whether at the beginning or later, the resemblance between a fallen aviator and the luckless Icarus. To emphasize the relation, he needed to requisition classical atmosphere as well as classical fact. This he has accomplished through the stone-cutter's interest in "Phoenix-Latin," and the Oxford Dean, who lectures on Latin poetry.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** The reserve of the refugee stone-cutter is used to advantage in conserving economy and in suggesting facts, rather than stating them, to the reader. The Frenchman tells almost nothing of his past life, of which much is nevertheless revealed through the illuminating high lights of the action.

**SETTING.** Why is an indefinite English village the best locale?

## T. B.

**GENERAL.** Fannie Hurst is represented in three collections of "The Best Short Stories." The reason lies in the facts that she is one of the skilled technicians of the time, one of the hardest workers — sparing no pains to achieve that sound structure and perfection of detail which only the seasoned artist knows how to achieve; that by narrative, which stands without emphasis of didactic or propaganda purpose, she yet manages to convey an idea much larger than the story itself, and that she has quite literally created a unique world of men and women who nevertheless in their behavior reflect a part of the myriad-minded and many-mooded contemporary life. Any one of the present stories will prove the truth of this assertion.

**STARTING POINT OF "T. B."** "The flint that struck spark for 'T. B.,' " says Miss Hurst, "was the sight of a humpy looking girl standing before the window display of a Tuberculosis exhibit."

**PLOT.**

*Initial Impulse:* Sara Juke faints at the Hibernian Hop. How is this event prepared for in the finally developed story?

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* Sara and Charley leave the hall. This stage is succeeded by others preparing for the counter-play and emphasizing the T. B. motif. They see the Tuberculosis exhibit, and visit it. The pink-faced young attendant gives Sara a circular. Sara fears the disease. She revisits the display. The attendant, Eddie Blaney, shows his interest, advising her to go to a clinic for examination. At Sharkey's Sara tells

Charley the doctor's verdict. What obvious steps in the action has the author omitted, thus giving the reader the chance to help in constructing the story?

*Dramatic Climax:* Charley leaves Sara. (This climax is, of course, intensified by its juxtaposition to the doctor's verdict; in fact, the two details together may be regarded as a double climax. Miss Hurst is one of the best authors to study for duplication of dramatic climax effect. See also, for example, "Ice Water.")

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* Eddie Blaney meets Sara and takes her to the country. (Has this step been prepared for duly? Why is it one not left to the reader's imagination—that is, the engagement made previously?) Eddie encourages Sara, telling her she will be well by Christmas.

*Climax of Action:* (Deduced by reader.) How has Miss Hurst in the developed story suggested the inevitable ending?

**CHARACTERS.** By what speeches and acts does the author flash the personality of Sara? By which ones in particular does she draw the reader's sympathy to her? How is Hattie Krakow used to emphasize the appeal of Sara? What other purpose does Hattie serve? How is her interest in Sara motivated? How far is Charley one of a type? To what extent individualized? Is the type or the individual more necessary to the author's purpose here? How does Charley's treatment of Sara enhance the reader's interest? How is Blaney's solicitude for the girl motivated? Do the three characters constitute the three figures of a "triangle" story? If so, is the triangle one of distinctly new features?

**SETTING.** How many times does the scene change? How is contrast employed in the construction of settings? Does the change in scene conform to the plot action? Has this relationship a necessary unifying value? What is the time of the story?



**DETAILS.** How much space does the author consume before gliding into the introduction of character and setting? What is its worth? A student once asked Miss Hurst why she chose such openings, suggesting that quite frequently the reader found it difficult to see the connection. Miss Hurst smilingly replied that it was her idiosyncrasy. "That's where I take *my* fling." Is there more back of her words than her modesty allowed her to assert? What is the real contribution made by page 84?

What are the principal features of the economy by which she presents to the reader the opening situation?

Note the many details by which throughout the story the author keeps vividly before the reader the actual setting. Although her method is that of the romanticist, her result is one of reality. In listing these details, notice that another purpose is also effected — another economical device. "On a morning when the white-goods counter was placing long-sleeve, high-neck nightgowns in its bargain bins," page 85, conveys the season, better than statement could do (because more picturesquely) at the same time it builds up the scene.

How has the author enriched the main narrative by contrast with lightly suggested situations? (See the Van Ness passages.)

Study the narrative for sounds and odors as well as for pictures. Contribution to vividness of reality? What contrasts do you find in these sense appeals?

How does Miss Hurst make most of her transitions in time and place? Is the double space well used? What is the acting time of the story?

From whose angle of narration is it told? Is there a shift from the objective to the omniscient point of view? If so, is it justified by a gain?

## “ICE WATER, PL—!”

**STARTING POINT.** According to Miss Hurst, “Ice Water, Pl—!” had its germinal beginnings in the self-imposed query: Given, a mother whose joys are largely the vicarious ones that come through her daughter, to what extent can her own personal life become more and more submerged?

**SETTING.** The locale of this story is the same as that of “T. B.” Point out evidence, explicit or implicit, of its being New York City. In general, notice that the larger setting of Miss Hurst’s stories is frequently St. Louis or New York. Account for this fact. How long is the action of “Ice Water, Pl—!”?

**PLOT.** The *initial impulse*, the force that sets the story-action going, is Mr. Vetsburg’s invitation to Mrs. Kaufman and Ruby to “come down to Atlantic City over Easter.” (Fill in the important steps toward the dramatic climax.) The *dramatic climax* is a double header: First, Ruby accedes, after a struggle, to her Mother’s wishes that she accept Mr. Vetsburg. Second, Mrs. Kaufman gives in to Ruby’s marrying Leo. By this clever duplication, not only is the turning point made more emphatic, but the sympathy of the reader is evoked for both mother and daughter. It is another excellent instance of economy joined to strength.

The *climax of action* follows without much delay: It is bound up with the dénouement, since in it Mrs. Kaufman learns that it is herself—not her daughter—whom Vetsburg loves.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** What is Mrs. Kaufman’s outstanding trait? Ruby’s? Vetsburg’s? Is Mrs. Kaufman’s dominant characteristic logically connected with

her capability as a boarding-house keeper? Are the two so portrayed as to make satisfactory the dénouement, by which Mrs. Kaufman will be married to Mr. Vetsburg? What preparation leads to the happy outcome?

How is Ruby akin to her sisters, Sara Juke and Selene Coblenz? How is she differentiated? Is the individualization stronger than the type resemblance?

Close your eyes after finishing the story and call up images of the two main women characters and of Vetsburg. Go over the narrative and see how the author has given you these pictures, and also observe how accurately you have registered the impressions. If there are discrepancies between your memory and the presentation, whose fault is it?

What purposes are fulfilled by the background figures? Recall instances of humor to which they contribute. Have you ever met Irving Katz?

Why is Leo so slightly touched? Do you notice other measures taken to keep in the foreground the middle-aged pair? What are they?

DETAILS. What popular attitude does the philosophy of page 181 subtly criticize? What is the link which connects the generalizing preliminary with the particular instance? (Notice that the slide is effected on the towels.)

Where is the first scene laid?

Who, in the first scene, reveals most of the situation to the reader?

Page 187 contains an important clue to the subsequent action. What is it?

What is the purpose of the next fully developed scene (in Mrs. Kaufman's apartment)?

What is the purpose of the continuation of the scene (after Vetsy's exit, page 194)? Does the division into two parts (before and after the women retired) contribute to more than an impression of reality?

Study the transition between the night scene and

## 108 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

eleven o'clock the next morning. What value has the paragraph (page 205) beginning "At eleven"?

How does the author effect the return of Vetsburg and Mrs. Kaufman to the apartment? How is Ruby disposed of? (See page 107, "Down by Gimp's I sent her," etc.).

Miss Hurst is an expert scene-developer. Her setting is clear; her characters move as they move in real life; the action is in the right tempo for the conditions and the time at hand; no scene exists without a definite purpose. It is the fine scene-work which gives to her stories a dramatic quality equalled only by that of the stage.

Compare the scene work of this story with that of "T. B." and of "Get Ready the Wreaths."

Has the Easter season a contributory significance?

## GET READY THE WREATHS

GERMINAL IDEA. " 'Get Ready the Wreaths' was, of course, inspired by the overwhelming drama of the Russian Revolution and my own feeling that even Siberia had at last been justified."—*Fannie Hurst*.

ANALYSIS. The predominating interest and hence line of action, since it composes a line of action, is Mrs. Horowitz's desire, struggle, to return to Russia. This struggle has been going on for years; it has its roots and beginnings in the past. Alone it would not make a short-story; for the conflict is too level, too empty of actual event.

The beginning of the complication is the engagement of Selene Coblenz, her love affair constituting the second line of interest. This is the truly complicating line, although there is also a third line of interest, properly subdued. It enters as a factor, first, in the first line. Mark Haas shows his interest in Mrs. Coblenz by offering to arrange for her the details of the Siberian journey. For a long time this interest exists, seemingly, only as a means for developing the main struggle: there is an entire amalgamation of the two interests. (See e. g., page 342, "Mark Haas is going to fix it for me," etc.).

Selene Coblenz's request brings on the immediate struggle. It is only a step, however, in Mrs. Horowitz's long fight to get back. It turns out to be not a deciding step, but one in complication. See that by considering the old lady's struggle and the daughter's mental anguish, Shila's search for ways and means starts from it, rather than is decided by it. There is no specific struggle after it, only a complication waiting to be solved. Mrs. Coblenz could not have started for Russia until after the

reception, anyway. If Mrs. Horowitz had lived, she could have gone. Nothing is determined by this minor climax: much mental trouble starts from it for Shila. It simply advances events to a state, where at a later moment they will need a struggle and a decision.

But for another reason this decision of Mrs. Coblenz's is a big crisis, though not the big plot crisis; especially is this true if you regard the story as a character story. Shila's devotion to her mother: her devotion to her daughter — which will win? Will her sense of duty triumph over her indulgence? The girl's reasoning, the impracticability of her mother's desire assist to "play up" the struggle. Selene is dominant with Shila. She is a great-hearted woman, but she has a weakness. If she had not had, Selene might have been a less self-centred girl.

With the news of the reception evening, the three lines of interest come together; the high point of the complication is reached. There is a momentary crisis for Mrs. Coblenz. Her mother can go back to Russia now; she will insist. Selene's line enters as an accomplished fact to prevent: It helps with the other to compose a crisis here. The third line is present as a factor to assist: But Mrs. Coblenz is blind to it: it is a suspended resource.

If, as you might have expected, the writer had derived her solution from that line, she would have done the obvious thing. Also she would have made Shila's escape from her weakness, easy. And, last of all, she would have finished a struggle which had its derivation in blood and sacrifice with a conclusion too quiet and unheroic.

The author did what technically might have been a very bad thing. To get your solution out of a physical or natural stroke, by sudden illness or an accident of nature, is equivalent to using a god from the machine, — a charge often laid at the feet of Euripides. But here the death is so logical a consequence — so well pre-

pared for — that you cannot quarrel with it. And there is a heroic touch in having Mrs. Horowitz die beneath her tremendous recollection and appreciation of all the triumph had cost. The outcome is satisfying: she died in a high moment. Shila is not too much to blame, and consolation for her is at hand. And Selene, being right from her angle of youth and life, is both happy and sufficiently rebuked.

The story, then, has both an opposing and an assisting line. The climax at which all meet and the forces balance is the Revolution news. It is not the deciding moment in the Selene story: that is over.

The emotional effect of this story represents in a high degree one of the author's best achievements. Her stories are notable for their human appeal. One man went so far as to state to the present critic that he would willingly have bartered his soul to enable that old lady to go back to Russia. Study all the ways by which she reaches your sympathy.

GENERAL METHODS. "Almost invariably my plots emerge from characters, rather than characters from plots. I doubt if this latter is ever as sound in method except in the detective or picaresque story.

"I have never based a short story upon a concrete incident, written a character directly from 'life,' or, except rarely, incorporated a speech actually heard into dialogue.

"A situation may suggest the beginnings of a story, or a chance word be the seed of an idea, but most often I find myself putting around the hypothetical psychology of folks. . . .

"... Unity of Effect, no matter how the unities must be smashed to attain it, I consider the corner stone of short-story writing. Without it, architectural beauty and continuity of development are impossible. . . ."

— *Fannie Hurst.*

## MR. EBERDEEN'S HOUSE

STARTING POINT AND FIRST PROCESSES. "Mr. Eberdeen's House" was to have been originally only the effect of an old New England House upon a New Englander who had become rather enfranchised from his austere beginnings, and returned to find them only more crabbed, more grim, than ever, and himself strangely, inexplicably connected with them. The explanation of how he was connected with this distasteful setting, and of why it was distasteful to him evolved the author's theme. The hero's great-grandmother had fled from the same grimness and straight-lacedness and puritanism by running away with a Frenchman, just before the birth of her child, of whom Mr. Eberdeen was, contrary to his bleak, orthodox suspicions, the father. The author's plan was to have Mr. Eberdeen, representing all that was distasteful to the hero (Hastings) in the New England character, the hero's ancestor without his knowing it — the great-grandmother after she had fled, having presumably taken the name, for herself and child, of Tremaine.

The ghosts seemed to Mr. Johnson the only media through which to tell the story pictorially. Whether one believes ghosts in a story real or not is, in his opinion, beside the point, so long as they *seem* real enough for the sake of the telling. They may be compared to the *deus ex machina* of Euripides, of to the scenes in motion pictures which show what some one is dreaming or thinking.

ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPED STORY. Some inner stories may be detached from the outer husk as a letter is drawn from its envelope (find examples in these collections). Others are a necessary part of the external



interest and refuse to be separated without damage to each. This story is one of the latter sort.

Jack Hastings and Julia Elliott are betrothed. He has come to New England, after some time in Paris, to make her a visit. It is understood, at the end of the action, that they will go abroad to live. So much for the outer wrappings which are bound so closely to the heart of the matter, as is indicated in the

*Preparation for the Significant Part, or the Inner Story:* Jack's mystic knowledge of "Mr. Eberdeen's" house; his strange mood; "they talked of it bein' ha'nted." These details are followed by the more immediate preparation; Jack is ill and sleepy, he sleeps. (Or *does* he sleep?)

Here, then, the outer story merges, by way of Jack as a medium, with the inner.

*Dramatic Climax of the Entire Story:* (Formed by the developed scene which constitutes the inner action.)

*Explanation:* The characters are Jack Hastings, his counterpart, and the woman. Jack in his dream or vision apparently represents in his thoughts part of the personality of his great-grandfather; the ghostly counterpart represents that ancestor as he really behaved, at what must have been the original enactment of the scene. (Except, of course, that Jack was absent from that drama, played long before his birth.) This unique treatment of dual personality should be studied with Markheim, William Wilson, Jekyll and Hyde. For daring and yet naturalness combined with mysticism, it surpasses them. The end of the scene, in Jack's vision, shows the ancestor about to do violence to his wife (Jack's great-grandmother), but restrained by Jack himself. (Interpreted, this is to say that the better nature of Jack's ancestor had actually triumphed and he had rushed from his wife.)

*The Climax of Action (Whole of the Story):*

Jack Hastings awakes to find that he has been ill. He lies in a state of semi-realization, of semi-lapse into the world of his recent adventure.

*Dénouement:* Julia and Hastings plan to live abroad. The old man whom Jack had met appears and suggests that he saw the lady of the house go from it to meet Henry. (Is this old man a figment of the fancy or is he real?) In this addition to Jack's vision is furnished the *dénouement* of the inner story, Julia leads Jack to Mr. Eberdeen's room, which proves to be the one wherein he had seen the ghostly drama. The original of "John" is the portrait Julia had hung upon the panel. Julia reveals that when Jack came downstairs he had looked like the portrait. Clinching the reality of the whole thing is the discovery of the gray chiffon, with the bloodstains.

COMMENT. This, then, is a narrative the mystery of which must be explained by each reader to his own satisfaction. If the reader "believes" in the supernatural, he will take the whole thing, ghostly scene and all, as somehow occurring. If he does not "believe," he will then accept the scene as the obsession of a sick man — with a few details left in mystery. I should class it as a story of the supernatural, wherein the appearance is visible to the sick or the clairvoyant mind. Knowing that the germinal idea had to do with the effect of a house upon a man, and that the story is developed by emphasis on this feeling, deepened by a ghostly visitation, one would find it impossible to characterize the story as other than one of atmosphere. And it is the best atmosphere story in the four Yearbooks. The right way to achieve an atmosphere story, Stevenson told us long ago, is to begin with a mood induced by a place; Mr. Johnson has pursued the plan.

Atmosphere is, then, bound up with setting; plot interest follows in importance; character is of note mainly

in the unique manifestation of dual personality. A dreamer, an artist, an idealist — any sensitive medium — would fittingly play the part demanded. The love interest enriches the action and humanizes the character.

## THE VISIT OF THE MASTER

**COMMENT.** Mr. Johnson has here produced a satirical character study, wherein Mary Haviland Norton well nigh stands in place of the story; but in playing up the visit of Hurrell Oaks he has secured narrative interest. That a mere visit should have loomed as an event, and that the loss of it should have proved so disappointing becomes the test of Miss Haviland's character. Building a story upon so negative an incident is a feat worthy of Henry James — or Mary Haviland Norton.

### **PLOT.**

*Initial Incident:* Miss Haviland invites Hurrell Oaks to Newfair.

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* It appears that the great man can stop only for an hour or so. To receive him worthily, Miss Haviland decorates her apartment in borrowed and elegant trappings; she invites a select few to meet him. George Norton, who is devoted to Miss Haviland, is not included.

*Dramatic Climax:* Hurrell Oaks arrives earlier than he is expected, while Miss Haviland is in her bath-tub, and since there is nobody to receive him he goes away.

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* Miss Haviland rushes out to detain him as the possibility occurs to her that his knock may have heralded the famous guest. He is gone. She betrays to one of her students her bitter disappointment.

*Climax of Action:* As the guests arrive she tells them that Hurrell Oaks could not wait, though he and she have spent an "immemorial" hour together.

*Dénouement:* Two days afterward she announces her engagement to George Norton.

**PRESENTATION.** The story is recounted ten years later, after a formal dinner, by the student whom Miss Haviland had helplessly, impulsively, taken into her half-confidence. Her auditor is the narrator, presumably Mr. Johnson, himself. The related story is exceptionally well told with regard to the assumed narrator; she betrays just enough of the school-girl character and manner to enliven the drama of middle age. From a stylistic point of view, the narrative testifies to the author's craftsmanship; for it is almost as if told by a young woman.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Mary Haviland was interesting to the girl narrator because of her native ability, determination, and her acquired connoisseurship. Harmonizing her fundamental power with her culture, hitting off little discrepancies and exaggerations that the reader might see her whole — these demanded a highly conscious technique. Further, to regard her half-seriously, half-lightly, yet in the end to demand the reader's sympathy and admiration for her, required nothing short of Meredithian genius. Finally, the bubble of fun blown out at the last: "She was no doubt *in the tub*," etc., indicates an irresponsible humor which makes play of the whole situation.

## THE STRANGE-LOOKING MAN

**THE STARTING POINT.** "I got the idea for 'The Strange-Looking Man,'" says Mrs. Costello, "from reading of the homecoming of a Canadian soldier, limbless, partially blind, wholly demented, to his young wife — Homebringing, I should have said. As I read, I simply *saw* the story as it was written, nor could I help feeling as I wrote that my little boy symbolized Germany as she is and my young man life, as we are now so strongly hoping it may come to be."

The statement from the author serves, also, to explain her symbolical treatment.

**SETTING.** Should you judge, from the connotation, that the time is the near or far future? What is the place? How is it indicated?

**ACTION.** Brief; it begins "One morning," page 363, and ends with the final words, page 364. Do you foresee the dénouement?

The narrative is remarkable in that it supposes a condition the reverse, in many respects, of life in ante bellum days. The *child* rocks his *father's* cradle. He is frightened by a whole man. The wrecks of men, in the pictured setting, contrast sharply with the traveler, pages 363, 364.

**THEME.** State the underlying idea, and show how it is intensified by subsidiary ideas.

## VENGEANCE IS MINE

**THEME.** Like "The Strange-Looking Man," this story is pre-eminently one of idea. Written before the United States declared war against Germany, it none the less is of the Allied spirit. At the same time, it hints that Germany has an ideal. (See page 151: "a vision which it alone had understood.") Would the same author probably hold in 1919 his original concept? Does his dénouement negate the ideal?

How is the "fear or desire" (page 145) bound up with the dénouement?

**SETTING.** What is the place of the dream? The time of the dream? What outer occurrences emphasize it? (See, notably, page 152, where the place of emphasis is given to the "bold boom of the batteries.") Give an external and an internal proof of the fact that "Christmas Eve, 1916" is the time *in* the dream.

How much of the prophecy (pages 147, 148) has been fulfilled?

**THE NARRATOR.** In what branch of the service is the narrator? Value of his point of view? Why does he use the dream device? By what difficulties is the dream method usually attended? How successful has Mr. Jordan been in avoiding them?

**THE ACTION.** What is the chief incident of the inner action? How does it emphasize the theme? What relation has the outer action to that of the dreamed action? Compare the technical device with that of "Mr. Eberdeen's House." Wherein lies the power of the dénouement? Why does the narrator say, "I thanked God for the Germans"?

## THE CALLER IN THE NIGHT

**THE STARTING POINT.** Mr. Kline is not sure of his beginnings; perhaps it came to him out of the ether "or whatever it is that niggardly generates ideas." "If it had any starting point, perhaps it was in a talk I remember once having with Braithwaite. I kicked because the embattled farmers and others of New England never seemed to fire a shot but some ready recorder was instantly on hand to jot it down in a paean of praise; while Pennsylvania, with pretty good history of its own, too, and full of legend and lore, had gone totally unreported by comparison. Maybe I started out to hunt up its legends."

After this pleasant admission, Mr. Kline confesses that "The Caller in the Night" is no rendering of an actual legend. "So far as I know there never was a Screamer Moll, and no skeletons. The thunder storm probably happened. The rest is all made up."

The statements are invaluable to one who sets out to judge a piece of work with due regard to the author's purpose. His motive, in brief, is comparable to that of Washington Irving. Father Knickerbocker is the "created legendary" figure in which New York will take pride forever.

### THE PLOT.

*The Dominant Features:* Fannie and George kill Ned. Fannie and Mollie escape to Pennsylvania. Later George joins them. He falls in love with the girl. The mother's power returns. Occasion throws the girl with George. At his protests, Mollie understands he is trying to "make a fool of her," as he



has of her mother, Fannie. She runs from him. The incident of the storm. Mollie later finds Fannie and George. She (evidently) kills them. Long years after, she tells her story. She dies.

*Presentation:* The details as just suggested are woven in the lurid narrative Mollie tells Mrs. Pollard and Mrs. Reeves. Study the details—they are the essential “story”—and observe how skillfully the author has rearranged them. To illustrate, he necessarily begins with what formed the final step in the series above. What is the reason for the *incoherent presentation* of the story Moll tells? Mark out the steps in the plot, Initial Incident, and so on to the Dénouement, using the scheme found throughout this book.

**SETTING.** What is the locale of Mrs. Pollard's home? Is this setting in any way a part of the plot, or does it merely provide background for Moll's story? Is it near the setting of the rehearsed narrative? Why does the thunderstorm form an essential part of the setting? How are the weather, the time of day, and the place harmonized in the atmosphere or mood of the entire narrative?

**CHARACTERS.** What characteristics of Mrs. Pollard and Mrs. Reeves make them especially desirable, for story purposes, as listeners?

In what ways is the portrait of Moll given? What is the significance of the fact that she is *introduced* by her “unearthly cry”? (Page 369.) The main image of her person is given (page 371) as “the tall and thin but heavily framed figure of an old woman.” Is this picture emphasized, for cumulative effect, or is it left to stand alone? Are Moll's first words well calculated, as her initial speech? Why?

Through Screamer Moll's story, the story of an insane woman, Fannie and George appear striking in certain details; dim in others. Is this both a necessary

fact, under the circumstances, and also better for the author's purpose? Describe Fannie.

DETAILS. Mr. Kline used the rehearsed method of telling the main story as an unconscious effort, no doubt, to heighten the effect of legend, of "something by and gone, all shadowy as recalled."

Where, in the finished story, does the author first sound his legend idea?

Why does he introduce the thunderstorm? Even if Moll had not died, would it have had logical place in the story? That is, would the repetition of the storm scene cause a reaction from her crazed brain which would impel her to speech? Does the duplication of the storm (the one of the inner story echoed by the one of the setting) increase the totality of effect?

Why is the place of emphasis (the end) given to the finding of the two skeletons?

What are the chief sound effects? Are they in harmony or contrast?

GENERAL VIEWS OF MR. KLINE. He thinks Mr. Braithwaite is right. "The only test of a short story is, 'Has the writer something interesting to say, and does he say it in a manner to interest me?'" (See, by way of comparison, Mr. Donn Byrne's statement.) Mr. Kline further believes that the great writers have never had to thrash the air with "plot"—"from Hawthorne and Poe and Bret Harte, from Balzac and Gautier and Maupassant, from Tolstoy and Turgenev and Dostoievsky, down to our own O. Henry." According to his statement and illustrations, how is he probably considering the word plot? What difference is there between plot invention and plot presentation? Does De Matpassant show skill in arranging the plot *order* in "The Necklace"? What would have happened to the story had he not created the surprise? What would be the loss in these stories of O. Henry had he not carefully constructed his plot—"The Gift of the Magi," "A Double-Dyed Deceiver," "The Furnished Room"?

Mr. Kline thinks that the only way to learn to write is to write and keep writing, under wise and kindly criticism of course. And he adds that if one can be severe and honest enough one's own criticism is best. "To be a real writer, one must master himself, master the world, and master his art."

## IN THE OPEN CODE

### PLOT.

*Initial Impulse.* George Roberts, freight engineer, drinker and fighter, on the way to ruin and discharge, falls in love.

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* He passes every day the home of his sweetheart and toots his whistle in a musical code fashion, "to let her know he's safe." The whistle has a softening effect on a crowd of woodsmen, engaged in restoring a Virginia manor house and grounds. "The world seemed a bit better for it." The signal ceases. The cynics say the engineer is probably drunk again. But one of the men, Gordon, makes a special trip to the village to find out.

*Dramatic Climax:* The engineer and the girl, he learns, are married; they are away on their honeymoon.

*Steps to the Climax of Action:* The signal is resumed farther along the line, where the engineer and his wife have set up a home of their own. For three weeks the signal is faithful; then it ceases, again, abruptly. After four days Gordon goes again to the village. Just as he returns, the men hear the signal fainter and farther away.

*Climax of Action:* Gordon tells the men that the wife is dead and is buried farther down the line; he whistles "to let her know he's safe."

PRESENTATION. "It made a neat little story," Mr. Kline says of the engineer's reclamation and present custom of signaling. But without the supporting band of

workmen to throw it into relief it would hardly stand alone. The group becomes, then, an integral part of the 1,500 word narrative which is given to the reader.

CHARACTERIZATION. The girl, whose name is not even mentioned, is the most potent character — or, perhaps, love as expressed through her makes her, symbolically, dominant. The engineer is the most important, by virtue of his active rôle; the workmen are the background characters, as they come under the influence of the simple demonstration of affection; they are the foreground characters, as the story is presented. What traits are manifest in various individuals of the group? How do these traits sharpen the dénouement?

SETTING. Why is Virginia chosen?

DETAILS. What contribution is made by the choice of "Annie Laurie"? On what thought does the final bar end? Did you, as you read, notice this sinister clue? Why not?

## LITTLE SELVES

STARTING POINT AND STRUCTURAL PROCESSES. "You were right," Miss Lerner says, "about my knowing 'the prototype of old Margaret.' And every one of her storied recollections is a real one, told for the most part in her own words. She still insists so stoutly on the reality of the 'little old man with the high hat,' the bewitched churn, the fairies' chairs and tables, that one ends by believing in them, too. So you see the material came ready to my hand. All I had to do was to vivify it, and cast it in the most dramatic form possible.

"Old Margaret is not dead, however. She reads and re-reads 'Little Selves,' and says she can smell the peat fire and hear the kettle humming on the hob. It was an old friend of hers who died — of cancer, as the story ran; and Margaret used to spend many an hour talking with her those last days. Their reminiscences, however, were of the time of their young womanhood; they did not meet in the old country.

"All this cherished material had long lain in my mind. Its greatest appeal to me perhaps depended on the fact that I, too, had always been an inveterate ponderer of moments of my extreme childhood. Even at eight or ten, I used to re-live isolated moments of particular interest from my 'past,' which even then seemed bathed in a 'livelier light.'

"The final impulse came one day on hearing Stevenson's phrase, 'Nothing matters much that happens to a boy after he is seven.' At once I saw the whole story. Margaret must die, of course, and dying revisit the scenes of her childhood. That bit of manipulation would

heighten and intensify the whole tale. She must be a single woman, too, instead of a wife and the devoted mother of a difficult but promising daughter. She must be considerably older. She must retain her skill with the needle, and her piety. So I simply jotted down half a dozen words to name the several incidents of her dream, then began to write, visualizing the opening scene as I went. It was like transcribing at some one else's dictation matter already an intimate part of one's spiritual life. Isn't that the way one's best things come? I wrote only one rough draft, then the final copy. Hardly a word was changed. The title, oddly apt, I think, came to me when I wrote the line, 'She recreated her earlier selves and passed them on, happy in the thought that she was saving them from oblivion.'"

This full description of the constructive process renders almost superfluous either questions or further comment. It should be compared closely with Mary Brecht Pulver's similar résumé of her "Path of Glory."

"Little Selves" constitutes a happy cross between the "evoked ghost" story, such as one finds in Kipling's "They," and the pictures frankly labeled as memories, in a multitude of stories. For as Margaret says, the earlier selves "is realer" than the children of flesh-and-blood who surround her.

THEME. In what does the merit of the narrative lie,—theme, characterization, or plot? In connection with your own answer observe that Miss Lerner says, "As for plot versus theme, I think theme usually dominates. I have some idea I wish to expound—to illustrate by means of interplay of character and action. Idea, I feel, is really *The Thing*, rather than mere complication or rapidity of action."

In how many stories of these collections, do you feel the dominance of the underlying idea? In which, if any, is it lacking? In which do you feel the predominance of idea to such an extent as to swamp the story values?

PLOT. Show that the sentence on page 224, "Her

## 128 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

voice choked with sudden tears," is a sort of dramatic climax.

Why is it more artistic to leave the climax of action, the old woman's death, untold?

CHARACTERS. In what sense is the narrative a "character story"? Is a whole life really re-constructed? Is the author's chief object this re-living?

How is Margaret best visualized for *you*?

What is Anna's chief characteristic and what her main place in the plot?

SETTING. In what respects is the story a national representative? How do the two larger settings, as indicated, aid each other? Which is thrown into subjection? Why?



## THE WILLOW WALK

**PLOT.** In constructing his plot, the author devised a plan whereby a robber might escape with stolen money. Having invented it, he tested each part to make it *seem* detective proof; and in following up this process he created a novel variety of the detective story genre. Similar stories have effected a resolution of the complication by a pull at some loose end left hanging through inadvertence of the criminal, and have so conserved justice. Mr. Lewis, avoiding this usual device, has requisitioned the peculiar advantages of dual personality to bring about the downfall of his criminal. (Compare with this *motif*, the one found in Frederick Stuart Greene's "Galway Intrudes," a story which has much in common with "The Willow Walk.")

A thief, therefore, who plans his get-away by first *inventing* and then *pretending* to be his own "brother," ultimately becomes the brother. The transformation is made plausible through the histrionic gifts attributed to the robber whereby he *is*, rather than merely *acts*, the represented character.

To the end that ultimate confession will occur, the brother must be religious; to the end that punishment is efficacious, the confession must be received with incredulity. These are necessary, if unconscious, preliminaries to this representative of the series which begins with Poe's "William Wilson," and which includes "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

**PRESENTATION.** The author first sets forth details that lead to the beginning of the action, the most important of which convey that Jasper Holt is acquiring a new

hand-writing, that he is a respectable paying teller, that he is a good actor.

*Action Antecedent to the Present:* Read the story, and find under its superstructure the groundwork of Jasper's plan. How much preparation has been necessary? How long has it required, probably, to accomplish it? Has the author begun at the best point possible in the story action?

*Incidents of the Complication Leading Immediately to the Dramatic Climax:*

1. Jasper Holt prepares the hiding place.

Taking his car from the garage, Holt starts toward Rosebank, but turns aside to buy candy, which he has packed in boxes that imitate books. He purchases two novels. To one who recognizes him, he pretends he is looking after bank property. He reaches Rosebank; he enters the house of the willow walk, removes the candy to the paper wrapper, and places the two imitation books, with the novels, on the bottom shelf of the book-case. (Incidentally, he makes use of the principle exploited by Poe in "The Purloined Letter.")

2. Jasper establishes his identity as "John Holt."

He takes down a religious work, from which he selects a name to "spring"—Philo Judæus. He changes his clothes and becomes his own brother, hermit and religious fanatic. Downstairs he speaks to a neighbor; he makes purchases at the drug-store and the grocery; he visits Soul Hope Hall, speaks on Philo Judæus and prays for his brother Jasper.

3. He removes signs of his recent preparations, and re-establishes himself as Jasper Holt. (Note the significance of the Community Theatre scene.)

Jasper changes to his own clothes. On his way to town he throws out the candy and gives away his groceries. He burns the wrapper, later, in his boarding house. He takes part in theatricals; it is signifi-

cant that he is a good actor, really becoming the part he plays.

4. Jasper prepares for the robbery and his sure escape.

Five days later, he complains of a headache. He takes a day off. John calls at the bank and emphasizes the contrast between himself and Jasper. Jasper afterwards suggests that in the event of his robbing the bank John would undoubtedly aid in bringing him to justice (dramatic irony, here).

5. He completes his preparations outside.

"Persuaded" to go away for a week-end, he drives south to Wanagoochie, but circuits back to St. Clair. Two miles from Rosebank, he investigates a lake. En route to St. Clair, he puts his machine out of order and leaves it at a garage, giving his name as Hanson. Arriving by train at Vernon, he says his car is at Wanagoochie. He announces to his landlady that he is taking two suit-cases to Wakamin.

6. He robs the bank. (Minor climax.) He escapes.

With the road clear for flight, he transfers the parcels of bills to his suit-case. He takes the train to Wakamin, but gets off at St. Clair and retrieves his car from the garage. He drives toward Rosebank; spreads his lunch near the lake. At nightfall he runs his car over the cliff into the water. With his suit-cases, he walks into Rosebank, and at the house of the willow walk destroys all evidence of himself as Jasper. He stores away \$97,535 in the empty candy boxes. He goes to bed as John Holt.

*Dramatic Climax:* "I suppose John would pray," etc. Jasper Holt ceases to exist; John begins to exist as a constant entity.

*Incidents of the Solution Leading to the Climax  
of Action*

1. Jasper "acts" John.

John learns of the theft, calls on the bank presi-

dent and begs that his house be searched. President gets rid of him. He calls on the detective, who finally searches John's house. John directs attention to the shed where Jasper kept his car. The police refuse to search. Jasper has thus further entrenched himself, outwardly, as John.

2. Jasper changes, subtly, to John.

John prays for Jasper. He plans a trip south, but continues his religious studies. It is obvious that this modern Frankenstein is rapidly becoming the monster of his own creation. At the end of one and a half years, he has sloughed off most of his Jasper nature and acquired that of John.

3. He endures a period of final struggle.

The John part of him wishes to confess; the dying Jasper refuses to take him back to the bank. But at the Soul Hope Fraternity, he confesses that he stole. For a week he stays at home; then he goes out. On his return he discovers that the money is missing.

*Climax of Action:* He goes to the bank and confesses; his story is not believed. He has changed natures, completely.

*Dénouement:* The jail refuses to take him. He finds work at the sand pits.

For parallelism of the final situation, read Edith Wharton's "The Bolted Door."

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Bear in mind that the diverse personalities of Jasper and John are bound up in Jasper, that although "John" was originally invented and then assumed, he finally dominated. The dramatic climax marks the point at which the outer Jasper disappears; the climax of action marks the disappearance of the inner Jasper. The man who goes to work at the sand pits is, essentially, John.

**DETAILS.** Suspense, one of the best features, in the earlier two-thirds of the story, operates progressively,

the cause shifting with the various steps of the action. For example, perhaps the first important question aroused is, "What is Jasper doing all this for?" The second, "Will he succeed in carrying out his well-laid plans?" Meantime, subordinate questions arise, to be satisfied by the author in the unfolding of the narrative. Show that suspense works of necessity less forcibly toward the end, where the outcome becomes more and more inevitable.

Do you know what became of the stolen money? Should that trailing thread be gathered up, or is it better left as it is?

Mr. Lewis declares that "The Willow Walk" has, so far as he can remember, no history at all. But he contributes the following by way of his views on the short-story:

"Technique defeats itself. The more nearly perfect it becomes, the nearer it is to stagnation. This rule holds true whether it be applied to ecclesiastical ceremony, to that humorous art known as 'the manners of a gentleman,' to the designing of motor-car bodies, or the practise of the arts. Once your motor-body designer has almost approximated the lines of a carriage, an innovator appears who boisterously ridicules the niceties of that technique, and, to the accompaniment of howling from the trained technicians, smashes out a new form, with monstrous hood and stream-line massiveness. Within two years he has driven out all the old technique, and is followed by a 'school,' neatly developing a new technique, in its turn to be perfected — then destroyed by some vulgarian who is too ignorant or too passionate to care for the proprieties of design.

"Once the technique of the academic school of painters of still life and landscape and portraits was practically perfect, a noisy, ill-bred, passionate crew of destroyers appeared, under such raucous labels as 'futurists,' 'vorticists,' 'cubists,' and despite the fact that their excesses have not become popular in plush parlors, these

innovations have forever ruined the pleasure of picture-gazers in the smooth inanity of the perfected old technique. And now their followers in their turn ——! As I write, the perfect militarist technique of the German empire has cracked into socialist republics. In time those republics will build up a perfect technique of bureaus, and be ready for the cleansing fire.

"Technique defeats itself. I have repeated the word 'passion' because that is the force that starts the rout. The man who is passionate about beauty or scientific facts, about making love or going fishing or the potentialities of Russia or revolt against smug oppressors, is likely to find himself cramped by the technique of the art which he chooses as a medium, to discard it, and to find a technique of his own. Austin Dobson could endure the triolet for the expression of delicate inexactitudes regarding French curés, but when Shelley was singing a world aflame, he made for himself a new mode of expression which, to formalists, seemed inexpressibly crude.

"And so to the short story. I am not afraid of this new technique of the proper beginning, the correct ending, the clever dénouement, the geometrically plotted curve of action — because I do not believe that anybody who passionately has anything to say is going to cramp himself by learning its pat rules. But I do believe that — before they go and smash the technique, anyway! — young writers may be saved much spiritual struggle if they be taught that there is nothing sacred, nothing they unquestionably must follow, in any exactly formulated technique.

"They will, of course, if they succeed, make a technique of their own. That is a short cut to salvation for them. It is only when a technique is that of other writers, when it is so crystallized that it can be definitely exhibited, that it becomes dangerous. I know that Joseph Hergesheimer in such absorbingly beautiful short stories as 'Wild Oranges,' 'Tol'able David,' or 'Asphodel' has a technique, a very definite idea of what he is doing; or what he is going to do before he starts, and of why he has

done things after he has done them. But he has not obediently imitated the technique of other writers. None knows better than Mr. Hergesheimer the great art of such men as Conrad, Galsworthy, George Moore; but none has less imitated them, less accepted their technique as his guidance.

"Curse Stevenson for that 'playing the sedulous ape,' which has led so many thousands astray. It was Stevenson's weakness, not his strength, that aping; and because of it his light is flickering, while that of his contemporaries, Rossetti, Hardy, Swinburne, Flaubert, who were not sedulous apes but men passionate about beauty or the curious ways of daily man, burns evenly and forever. Stevenson had an unequalled opportunity; he was a pioneer, with a pioneer's chance to stake out the first claim; yet once Kipling galloped into sight, roaring at deft Stevensonian technique, irreverent and violent as one of his own Rajputs, doing really dreadful things to the balanced decencies of proportion and melody, he routed Stevenson in a handful of years . . . and today we have read Stevenson, but we do read Kipling.

"Of course, of course, of course. 'Freedom is no excuse for violence.' 'The young man must train his mind.' 'From a study of the elders youth learns to avoid their mistakes' (but he doesn't!). 'Only the strong are able to govern themselves, to make their own codes of ethics or of beauty.' All those sage warnings — used equally against Martin Luther and the Bolsheviks, against the bad boy in school and Rodin. Basically, the disagreement between classicists and modernists is temperamental, and will, under various guises, endure forever. Only, let it be clearly recognized for what it is; let the classicist not mistake himself for a modernist; let the innovator not suppose because O. Henry is still so living a force that his followers have not already hardened his technique into a form classic and very dead."

## THE WEAVER WHO CLAD THE SUMMER

*Comment.*—The death of Harris Merton Lyon gives added poignancy to the story whose idealism and inspiration made for it a place in the first of Mr. O'Brien's collections. Judged by the test of Beauty, it is perhaps first on the list. The satisfaction vouchsafed each reader will be in proportion to his own Spirit of Work and his acceptance of the theme.

**THEME.** Since the Idea is foremost, it is quite fitting that it should be sounded early. The first approach is on page one (153, Yearbook) and in the form of a wonder as to what there could possibly be "in being a worker at the other, the evanescent thing." The answer, or the satisfaction of the wonder, is given in the essential story, stripped of its covering, pages 158-170. The theme is emphasized, strongly, in the sentence on page 170: "*You did the Work of your Hand!*"

**THE INNER STORY,** which allegorically satisfies the questioner, is the beautifully tenuous tale of the Mariner. It is woven of words in a style perfectly to suggest the spirit of summer and the evanescence of her garments, yet underneath the light superstructure are the foundations of the short-story. The *struggle* of the weaver, Andy Gordon, was successfully repeated for forty years. He died, knowing that he had been "a master-worker in a fabric that immediately dissolved," yet content. His death is the *dénouement* of the tale, just as the dialogue between the Voice and Andy (pages 159-161) forms the *initial incident*. What is the *dramatic climax*?

**PRESENTATION.** Andy Gordon's story is told in an



Italian restaurant, Pigalle's, over a poker table. The narrator is at first denominated the Ancient Mariner; eventually he proves to be the Andy Gordon of his tale. (See pages 158 and 171.) What new evaluation of the weaver's story do you make after learning that Andy was a violinist? Had you guessed any part of the whole situation before reading to the dénouement of the enveloping story? The narrator of the external action is, presumably, the author himself, who uses the first person "I."

Contrast, between the restaurant scene and character on the one hand and the summer scenes with Andy on the other, is the chief aid used to enhance the narrative. Point out particular examples of its operation.

DETAILS. Division I emphasizes the character of the Mariner; at the same time it repeats the theme. (See above), in the words, "Sufficient unto eternity is the glory of the hour." Why does the author give an entire division (III) to the lines: "Abruptly the old man left and went out into the snowy night. For there were tears in his eyes."

What value has the reference to Bernhardt, page 153?

Why is it well to set the rehearsal on a *snowy* evening? (Study the story for the answer.) Where is Pigalle's restaurant?

What effect has the tinkling of the door-bell, at eleven o'clock?

What principle of emphasis is at work on the description of the maid who bore the "sweet ineffable name of Philomene"? On the Mariner (as described, page 155)?

What do you gather from the absinthe and the *cigarettes jaunes*?

What addition is made to the comprehension of the Mariner in the suggested resemblance to Socrates and to Verlaine?

What colors and materials are used in Summer's dresses? Would others have served as well? After

## 138 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

knowing the dénouement (that Andy was a violinist) how do you interpret the passage "Andy was about twenty-eight years old then," etc., through the words "done by hand"? What other passages need similar interpretation?

How are the forty years so passed over as to emphasize, without needlessly repeating, Andy's Work?

What is your own reaction to this story?

## THE SUN CHASER

STARTING POINT. "You ask about the germinal idea of 'The Sun Chaser.' How can I tell you, for how do I know, what the germinal idea of my story is! I can recognize it after the story is written. But that makes it all the more difficult to say with certainty that the 'idea' is germinal. What Ambrose seeks is what every one of us in the world — even a Sun Chaser — wants: HAPPINESS. And the more ill-balanced or crippled a nature is, the more importunate is this demand for happiness. . . .

"It is easier to tell you how I came to write 'The Sun Chaser' than to tell you anything about it. . . . Early one morning in October I was sitting at my writing table in my little log cabin up in the Maine wilderness. It was about half past five, and I had started my fire and had my cup of cocoa and my crust of bread and was ready for work. But I sat there watching the dawn. Ahead of me I had one of the endless pot-boilers to do by means of which I provided bread and butter and met my responsibilities. The very thought of doing another of these 'things' made me feel ill and tired. Suddenly up over the field before my cabin with the dawn I saw the fleeing figure of the SUN CHASER running towards me. More I cannot tell you except that it was like listening to wonderful music as I sat there seeing the story unfold. I did nothing that morning except 'listen.' And for the next month I did no pot-boilers, but work on this story. . . . January first of that year I took up college lecturing and since then I have written no pot-boilers. . . ."—*Jeannette Marks*.

CLASSIFICATION. A novelette of twelve divisions, almost epical. (But see Miss Marks's own comment, be-

low. It is noteworthy that the present analyst uses the word "epic" to characterize the story, whereas Miss Marks sees in it a *lack* of the epic quality. Or so the implication runs.)

Apart from length, the character interest shifts from the Sun Chaser to his daughter, and his wife; the dénouement emphasizes the child's sacrifice. The epilogue emphasizes the inhumanity of man to man, and its abeyance in one case because of the sacrifice.

(The designation of the work as a novelette is, in all its bearings, indicative of values greater than those of the short-story.)

**PLOT.** Enumerate the earlier stages of the plot action. The *dramatic climax* is formed by the vividly summarized struggle between the Sun Chaser and his wife and child. Important *steps toward the end of the action* are: the placing of the Sun Chaser in the town lock-up; the mother's leaving Pearl alone while she goes to return the wash; Pearl's journeying to feed her father. (This journey is, in itself, the largest struggle *within* the narrative; for, the struggle to find happiness—as Miss Marks has indicated—is the chief one.) Study the various phases of the child's battle against the forces of nature.

*The Climax of Action.* Pearl falls in the snow.  
*Dénouement.* Her body is found.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** The most remarkable characterization exists in the case of the Sun Chaser. Miss Marks's ability to reflect the mentality of his brain is particularly worthy of study.

In contrast to the Chaser, and yet not in violent opposition, is his wife. Study her portrait, looking for her sense of the practical, softened by her own love and gentleness. What reaction on *you* is effected by her effort to keep her husband from the lock-up?

Pearl is tenderly and delicately drawn, and yet she evinces the practicality of her mother. See, e.g., pages

227, 244. In what ways is she the character who most compels sympathy? Would she do so, apart from the final supreme sacrifice?

DETAILS. The clip-clop of Ambrose's walk is a good example of the *sound* effects which increase the dramatic quality. Point out other instances. The lamp in Ambrose's home, "torch of flame and blackened stream of smoke," is illustrative of the *color* contribution. Give other examples. But, in this story, greater in value than either sound or color is the sense of motion. Mr. O'Brien calls attention to the "rhythmical progression" of the narrative. To this suggestion, add your own interpretation of the movement. Is there in the idea of the search for happiness a connotation of something never achieved, never-ended? and with the search a constant necessity for "Going—going—going"?

How does the story affect you emotionally? With regard to individual moments, how does the behavior of the liquor dealer move you? Is "contempt" the feeling you have for him, or is it stronger? What is your predominant feeling for Ambrose? Sympathy is incited through a combination of human relationships: 1. Pearl's love for her father; 2. Sybil Clarke's love for Pearl, and 3. her pity for Ambrose, her husband. What reaction is aroused by the incident wherein Pearl and David figure?

AUTHOR'S COMMENT. "Is 'The Sun Chaser' any longer than some of Stevenson's short stories, or Balzac's or Guy de Maupassant's? . . . And what is a short story, anyhow? Isn't the range of narrative the question involved in a short story? In a play I can tell from the 'feel' of the material whether it is a one-acter or full dress length. Isn't there a suggestion of the epic tendency in the novelettes as well as the novel:—the incidental use of incident, for example, contributing to the sense of mass? This is the sort of tendency one may not admit to short story or play where concentration is

so much greater. As I see it, now that it is done, 'The Sun Chaser' structurally as well as spiritually is marked by extreme concentration, and for that reason, personally, it would seem to me to be a short story. . . . The short story appeals to me from the technical point of view because it is more perfect than the novel, even as I consider the play to be more perfect structurally than the short story. I believe in concrete foundations and steel superstructures, and these, I think, can be built for the play, but not for the short story any more than for the poem. . . . It seems to me that the well-equipped artist always has a feeling for structure. Analysis, however, does not precede creation. Because of the nature of the creative artist's mind, it does not necessarily follow creation, either. There may be actual inability to analyze. It's as difficult to see the sum total of the work you've done as to see the sum total of yourself. The creative artist is not an analytical chemist of his own mental processes. . . . I have no standards. . . . I think that the thing which 'arrives' in short story or play is, like beauty, 'its own excuse for being.'"—*Jeannette Marks.*

## THE STORY VINTON HEARD AT MALLORIE

In this work Miss Moseley has presented a story of the war, a narrative of the supernatural having points in common with Mr. Rhodes's "Extra Men." In each, there is the spirit-world visitor, in each the truth conveyed by him which gives the story its thematic character, and in each the living power of the dead made manifest. As I have pointed out in "Representative Ghosts" (*The Bookman*, August, 1917), and elsewhere, mankind will be interested in ghosts so long as earth endures. The most decided impetus to fiction given by the war has been, so far, in the direction of the supernatural. It is interesting to know that Mr. O'Brien considers this and Frances Gilchrist Wood's "The White Battalion" the two most enduring legends contributed this year to the supernatural literature of the war.

### PLOT.

*Initial Incident:* Young Mallorie is killed in action.

*Steps toward the Climax:* His body is taken home to Mallorie Abbey, where masses are held over it. A Zeppelin appears, ready to discharge bombs just over the chapel, when an aeroplane swoops noiselessly down; the Zeppelin falls. The Germans are all killed. The aeronaut descends. He accepts the invitation to stay awhile at Mallorie Abbey and remains almost a week. Lieutenant Templar, as he calls himself, occupies dead young Mallorie's room and wears his clothes. He plays tennis and behaves in general like a normal healthy young English-

man, but that he has unusual powers is evinced by the words of the visiting general officer, "How does he *know*?"

*The Climax:* Lady Maurya's questions of the aeronaut terminate in the answer, "Because in me is the strength," etc., revealing his supernatural character. He disappears.

**PRESENTATION.** The single incident becomes subdued, rather than emphasized, by representing it as told to Vinton who, in turn, repeats it to Ware and Abigail. Credulity is gained in assuming for each narrator an implied or expressed belief,—“I said to her that I was the most believing man since the Dark Ages.” And their faith acts cumulatively to compel the reader's acceptance. By rehearsing in New England the story of English background and atmosphere, Miss Moseley gains for it sharpness and, at the same time, a certain *nuance*. The stormy night supposedly affects the hearers' credulity, and through them, once more, the reader's.



## HEART OF YOUTH

**COMMENT AND QUERY.** "For me," says Mr. Muilenburg, "the best story is the one that gives the reader the greatest after-mood, and this can be done with very little action. To give the feeling of an environment, to show character absolutely in a life-like manner, and to give nature and man an equal place: these I consider necessary to almost every story."

Using his own criterion, how well has Mr. Muilenburg succeeded in every respect mentioned above? What mood does the story give you? Where is the environment? Does the feeling that arises from it emphasize the general atmosphere?

Pages 172 and 173 introduce the boy, Frank, in his setting. Which is more important — character or place? Again measure your answer by the author's ideals.

"Both stories have kept close to realism," says Mr. Muilenburg, "as the greater part of both have been taken from my own experience, and circumstances are reproduced rather than fancied." Is there anything in the characterization of the boy that tells you he is, in some measure, a reflection of the author himself?

"Isn't it possible," asks the author, "that only the stories that have some situation where the characters must be shown in primitive fashion are enduring?" How would you answer this question in general? What is the situation in this story? May it be termed "primitive"?

**DETAILS OF COMPOSITION.** Pages 173, 174 recount an incident which shows the elements of conflict in the boy's soul. How does it prepare for the greater struggle? (See pages 179, 180, 181.) What purpose has the scene

## 146 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

between Frank and Bill with respect to later developments and particularly the struggle?

What contribution to the boy's character is made in his ceasing work only when the shadow of the cottonwood tree pointed north? in his taking the milk-pails from the hooks? (Page 182.)

In the "heart of youth" conflict (page 180) what emotions are arrayed against each other?

What value has the episode of the bird and the snake? What conditions make it an integral part of the action, not a forced parallel?

What details of setting and circumstance, and what traits in the boy combine to solicit your sympathy?

The little story is unified in character, place and time. It reveals by concrete symbol the significant phases of the struggle. It performs a *tour de force* in avoiding an extended analysis of the boy's psychology. Even though the narrative is told from Frank's "angle," the reader knows what he thinks by what he does and says, rather than by the author's analysis of his mental state. Further, the work makes a small contribution to literary history, since it is representative of a period of life in the Middle West, through which the author has passed; and it is reflected there now, to some extent. The fact that there is a strong vein of poetry throughout is because "poetry is found naturally in the life of a people who must struggle with a hard physical environment."

## AT THE END OF THE ROAD

Mr. Clayton Hamilton says in "A Manual of the Art of Fiction" (page 187), "—although the novel may be either realistic or romantic in general method, the short-story is almost of necessity obliged to be romantic. In the brief space allotted to him, it is practically impossible for the writer of short-stories to induce a general truth from particular, imagined facts imitated from actuality: it is far simpler to deduce the imagined details of the story from a central thesis, held securely in the author's mind, and suggested to the reader at the outset. It is a quicker process to think from the truth to facts than to think from facts to the truth." And in illustration of his statement, he adds that Daudet and de Maupassant, who worked realistically in their novels, worked romantically in their *contes*, also that the great short-story writers of our own language have been, nearly all of them, romanticists — from Poe to Kipling.

With this interesting tenet in mind, look over all the realistic stories in the four volumes we are studying, and try to apply to each the same methods by which the romantic stories are studied. Does the application break down? How far can you follow it? Try, for example, to analyze the plot of "At the End of the Road" according to the type used again and again in this book.

Why is this story told in the first person? Try telling it in the third person, beginning that is, "The latter part of the summer found *him* tramping," etc., and see what is lost.

Recall stories which have for setting a picnic ground, a fair ground, or other community gathering. Read Thomas Hardy's "On the Western Circuit." (In

"Life's Little Ironies.") Why is such a setting good for many types of story — whether realistic, romantic, comic, tragic?

Who is the central figure in Mr. Muilenburg's Iowa story? Would his story gain importance if detached from the subjectivity of the narrator — if the musings, observations and feelings were cut? What would happen to the whole narrative if such a change were made? Sum up the gist of the "story" in a few words.

What is the struggle? Wherein lies the human appeal?

What is the end of the action? How do you know?

The drunkard is an age-old figure, whether humorous or tragic. What is the essential difference between the tragic and the humorous portrayal? Why, for instance, does one laugh at an actor who plays the part of Cassio, in the drinking-scene from "Othello"? Why does one "feel sorry for" Bill as here conceived?

What theme is lightly touched and where?

What has this example of Mr. Muilenburg's work in common with the preceding story by him?

What color comes to mind instantly on thinking of his chromatic effects? Is it in harmony with the other story-elements? Are there notes of contrast?

## AT THE END OF THE PATH

The artistry of the author has worked consciously or unconsciously to create a finished piece of work. Told as a single episode in the experience of a traveler, it has the *magnitude* of the short-story.

PROPORTION. This essential is placed first, here, as being the chief means by which the effect is obtained. This effect comes, cumulatively, and is increased by giving climactic value to a coincidence. The coincidence, properly prepared for, is not of the kind that would have had great worth at the end of a longer story.

To illustrate how it might have been diminished, rather than increased:

Throw the time back to the youth of Giovanni and Rosa. Develop, at length, the love affair of the two young people. (This, alone, would require several pages.) Show the struggle of the girl, torn between religion and love. Present her prayer to the Virgin, the answer, and her decision (done dramatically, all this, perhaps in two pages), and her entrance into the nunnery. (So much would be done, logically, from Rosa's point of view.) Shifting the spot-light to Giovanni, show him stabbing the picture of the Virgin; his disappearance; his meeting the funeral, and his being informed of Rosa's death. The fact that it occurred at the time he stabbed the picture, as the coincidence, revealed after so long a development, would lack comparative height or worth.

Consider such treatment, and by force of comparison see that the author did best to treat the occurrences at a time long after they happened. The rehearsed story is in this instance undoubtedly the best. Further, by its

use, the last words (page 188), "I am Giovanni," are possible, intensifying the effect.

Considering the plot, what should you say are the chief steps in the development? Analyze both the inner story and in its relation to the enveloping action. The initial impulse, for instance, in the whole narrative is, the motivation for the monk's telling his story. The dénouement, similarly, is the fact that Giovanni and the monk are identical. What are initial impulse and dénouement of the rehearsed narrative?

SETTING. What is the worth of the setting in such a story, both as regards unity and convincingness? Note all the details which are distinctly Italian. What connotation have the cypress trees? Do they intensify the mood? In connection with the immediate scene in the chapel, what value has the sentence, "Beneath it, on a little stand, lay a slim-bladed vicious knife, covered with dust"?

CHARACTERIZATION. What added *theme* is conveyed in the description, "He was old, the oldest man Blagden had ever seen, etc."? Does one get it on first reading, or on reflection?

Is Blagden a character, or a reason for telling the story?

DETAILS. Point out the several examples of mysticism.

## THE WHALE AND THE GRASSHOPPER

CLASSIFICATION. "You are right," says Mr. O'Brien, "about 'The Whale and the Grasshopper.' It is a sort of fable and like the other sketches in my book it was written for the sake of the philosophy and humor. The starting point of the narrative was the remark of Padna Dan 'As the Whale said to the Grasshopper,' which I considered a good title, and accordingly wrote the phantasy."

Read as a sort of parallel, Emerson's "The Mountain and the Squirrel." What is the difference in the mental attitude of the two authors?

SETTING. Why is such a fable particularly well set near Castlegregory on a June morning? Note the intensifying of the setting by means of dialect. Would the place be realized without the Irish speech? Study the selective processes used to make the dialect easy to understand and yet distinctly characteristic of the Green Isle.

CHARACTERS. Standish McNeill and Felix O'Dowd seem to be real people,—at the very beginning, because of their names. The writer who is less careful would have endowed them with Mike or Pat. How are they kept up from start to finish as real? Why, for example, do you know they took that walk? What characteristic (at once Celtic and individual) of Standish enables him to "put across" so vividly a yarn which one *knows* all along can be only fable?

GENERAL METHODS. Mr. O'Brien states that he does not know how much he believes in or practices technical

distinctions. "Writing, I think, is the art that must evolve out of ourselves. I began life as an artist and specialized in sculpture, but finding there were things I could not express through such a medium I took to writing. When I am impressed by some important event, it fashions itself in story or drama form in my mind, without any conscious effort on my part, and when I feel intelligent — which is not often — I write."



## IN BERLIN

"In Berlin" is a *tour de force* of short-story construction. Miss O'Reilly has followed the well-known principle of beginning near the climax, that the story may gain intensity. The result is excellent for this one principle. But the whole composition of 125 or 150 words in reality plays up a single dramatic moment — not a single Incident.

The advantage to the student in reproducing similar "dramatic moment" stories will be to show the value of material in magnitude and worth, to teach him to appreciate climax, and to feel the advantages — and the disadvantages — of economy.

Read Chapter III in "A Handbook on Story Writing," describing and illustrating the Anecdote and the Incident.

## THE INTERVAL

**STARTING POINT.** Mr. O'Sullivan states that the story arose primarily from his foreseeing, in 1915, that one result of the War would be a revived interest in the supernatural. This foreknowledge illustrates that the author must be a little ahead of his time, rather than a little behind it.

The clearness of his prevision is illustrated in such stories as Gordon Arthur Smith's "Jeanne the Maid" (1915), Edith Wharton's "Kerfol" (1916), Alice Brown's "The Flying Teuton" (1917), and Frances Wood's "The White Battalion" (1918). It would be safe to hazard that these authors foresaw a similar demand.

**TITLE.** Meaning of "The Interval"? Is it apt?

**SETTING.** Why did the author choose London, rather than an American city? Is it clear from the story alone that Mr. O'Sullivan is thoroughly familiar with English locale and character?

In the first paragraph occurs the sentence, "A dense haze, gray and tinged ruddy, lay between the houses, sometimes blowing with a little wet kiss against the face." What color effects are in harmony with the atmosphere of the story?

**PLOT.** The *struggle* is in the mind of Mrs. Wilton. She wishes to be assured that "it was not all over, that he was somewhere, not too far away," etc., page 385. The *situation* is here disclosed, suspense having been used as to Mrs. Wilton's purpose in the previous pages. "This must be the tenth seer she had consulted since Hugh had been killed," page 384 is the most revelatory sentence.

Is the struggle successful?

The *initial incident* is this visit to the clairvoyant who "sees" Hugh.

Which of the incidents constitutes the *dramatic climax*?

"She slipped out of bed hastily . . ." (page 390) is the *climax of action*, or as much as is expressed. The reader must finish it for himself.

(The final sentence, with seeming carelessness dropping the information that "after her death the slippers could never be found," is an incentive to the reader's fancy. It has no plot value, except by *suggestion*.)

Did Hugh really return, or did Mrs. Wilton see him as a logical result of her brooding? If the former choice is made, the inference is that the reader accepts Hugh as a bona fide ghost; if the latter, then he is only existent through the sick-woman's mind and the mind of the clairvoyant. (See article, "Representative Ghosts," *Bookman*, August, 1917.)

DETAILS. Does the author believe the clairvoyant was genuine? If so, why does he say (page 384), "A look of complicity, of cunning, perhaps of irony, passed through the dealer's cynical and sad eyes"?

Are the visitations of Hugh arranged in climactic order?

Is Mrs. Wilton's illness adequately motivated? What is the double explanation of it? Do you accept the natural or the supernatural reason?

## THE TOAST TO FORTY-FIVE

### PLOT.

*Initial Incident:* On August 16, 1866, at Paris, Vermont, was held a banquet in honor of sixty-odd returned heroes. It was called the "Forty-five" banquet in honor of the boys who had not returned. Captain Jack Fuller proposed to save one bottle of vintage, the seal of which should be broken when in the course of years only two of the sixty heroes remained. On their final reunion they would drink a toast to "Forty-five."

*Steps toward Dramatic Climax:* Captain Jack was the first to join Forty-five. He left a son, who grew up, married, and died, leaving a son, young Jack Fuller.

In 1910, eleven heroes are living; by August 16, 1912, the ranks have dwindled to four old men. On August 17, 1912, Jack Fuller, grandson of Captain Jack of Civil War fame, in a drunken fit accidentally kills his baby. Sobered by the tragedy, he promises reformation. Succeeding months witness his hard struggle. He wishes, as a final safeguard, to join the National Guardsmen, but his wife, Betty, begs him to stay with her — she cannot bear alone the memories. Jack raises a company, becomes their captain, and drills them as Fuller's Fire-eaters. (The Mexican trouble motivates this step.) In August, 1916, three of the Forty-five are left: Henry Weston, Uncle Joe Fodder, and Wilber Nieson. In February, 1917, the United States severs relations with Germany. In July, half of Fuller's Fire-eaters have

been called upon to make up the Paris quota. Jack's name has not been drawn; but he wishes to enlist, the more so as his men will enlist in a body, not waiting for the draft. Betty implores him to remain; as she breaks down physically, he is torn between love and duty. Wilber Nieson and Henry Weston die. Only Uncle Joe is left; the toast cannot be pledged, after all, as planned.

Jack makes up his mind to enlist with his whole Company — Minor Climax. A dinner is proposed for them in place of the old reunion. Hundreds of Parisians gather; the largest assembly hall obtainable is crowded. Sam Hod, editor, is toastmaster by virtue of having three sons in the Fire-eaters. Uncle Joe Fodder sits at his right. Captain Jack Fuller at his left. Hod announces that Uncle Joe has requested that the toast to Forty-five be given under the present circumstances. Uncle Joe offers a toast to Captain Jack Fuller and his posterity.

*Dramatic Climax:* Jack's glass is raised; as he hears the words of Uncle Joe, he sees his wife's face. He pours out the wine and makes his toast with water.

*Climax of Action:* Betty sends Jack away — with a smile — and she goes to work at the box factory.

**DETAILS.** Is there a constant struggle for one character, or does it shift from Jack to Betty?

Is there, accordingly, a stronger or a weaker effect? Is the action unified?

Did you find the time element confusing or anywhere difficult to follow?

What details mark the action as belonging particularly to Vermont?

How many themes do you find in the narrative? Are they brought into essential harmony? What purpose of the author interests you most? What does the author mean to convey in the recognition of Sam Hod and

## 158 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

others that Jack's toast is almost identical with his grandfather's?

What do you think of the introduction and the emphasis on the wine? How does the following statement heighten interest?—"that liquor was consumed in the pledging of a toast."

Why does the author add so long a conclusion after the story action has been completed? Is he wise to give the final place of emphasis to the sentence, "All over America her name is legion"? Why?

## THE BIG STRANGER ON DORCHESTER HEIGHTS

**THE STARTING POINT.** Mr. Pentz states, regarding the story and its inception, "Substantially true in fact, it was told and retold to appreciative friends; then it was written at their suggestion. Probably it gathered moss during its latent existence and probably something was lost. . . ."

Technically, the story is an Incident. It has, however, an underlying significance elevating it above the Incident type. This significance becomes manifest in the dénouement, which reveals the influence of Lincoln.

**PRESENTATION.** The story is told by the omniscient author, who uses Paul's "slant."

**SETTING.** South Boston, March, 1860. Point out details which keep the locality before the reader from beginning to end. Why 1860, rather than 1861 or 1862?

**PLOT.** The plot being slight requires only a clear exposition of events in natural order. The author has made use of his one chance to create suspense and utilized it in holding up the name of the Big Stranger. One suspects, but is not sure until the last words.

**CHARACTER.** The main value of the story lies in its description of Lincoln, both in the words of the author — from Paul's angle — and by what the great man says and does. Which is more forceful?

Mr. Pentz's prescription for a story is brief: "Having the material write it out." He believes, further, in the use of simple language. "The average reader must not be sent to the dictionary; it divides the interest and

weakens the effect. A writer should eliminate his personality altogether; what he may know of other languages, or of intricate English, will not interest a reader who is busy with a villain in pursuit of the heroine. 'The play's the thing.'"



## “A CERTAIN RICH MAN —”

**CLASSIFICATION.** A perfect specimen of the short-story, even of the extreme type-form since all the unities are beautifully maintained. The setting is a dinner table in a home of wealth and refinement; the time is the present; the length of the action is, perhaps, an hour.

**STARTING POINT, AND FIRST STAGES OF CONSTRUCTION.** The author was present at a dinner where a young man of wealth, the host, remarked in the course of a discussion of the war that he would willingly give his life if through that sacrifice he could bring an end to the blood glut. The remark impressed every one deeply and was discussed at length. After due thought, Mr. Perry feeling the “story” in the situation, decided that it lay in having the man make good. He mulled the matter over for weeks before finding an answer to his next difficulty “In what way could he make good?” Then there occurred to him the expedient of having present an inventor who had invented an appliance which through its complete death dealing qualities would end the war forthwith. Here, then, was the complete thread of the story. Characters and descriptive background followed in due course. The author has an objection to sad endings and would like to have made it clear that the man came through his test safely. But the whole spirit of the story militated against this. So he left the outcome uncertain, but the inference is that Colcord yielded his life.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** There are nine persons, each deftly made a living part of the assembly. They are, in approximate order of importance: Nicholas Colcord and his wife Evelyn. (They may be spoken of as untried gold); Professor Simec (the assayer); Jeffery Latham

and Sybil his wife (tried gold); Arnold Bates (alloy); Jerry Dane and his wife Bessie (baser metal); Dr. Allison and his wife(?).

In spite of the rather generous number of characters, the part each has is so definite, serving by contrast and comparison to emphasize the main character — Nicholas Colcord — as to seem well-nigh indispensable. Moreover, apart from plot values and unity of effect, the number at the table works for verisimilitude. It is just the right size for a party in a conservative home, and it embraces the variety of types one finds in any similar group.

The dramatic method of characterizing is used to greatest extent: the men and women describe themselves in their remarks and in their behavior, particularly in the matter of measuring up to the test proposed. Go through the story with an eye to the speeches of each. Is any one person given many remarks? Who is the prominent spokesman? Why?

ANALYSIS OF PLOT AS PRESENTED. The *first significant step* in the action lies in Nick's remark (page 399) that he would give his life if in so doing he could end the war. (The foil to this remark is in Bates's, "I'm with Nick.")

The *dramatic climax* is sounded on page 403: "Suppose . . . that I could make this absurd condition . . . exist. . . ." It is emphasized in the clear call on page 404: "I am going to ask you to make your offer good."

The *climax of action* lies in Colcord's words (page 408): "When do you want me?" (This speech is emphasized by contrast in Bates's, "I withdraw right here." It is strengthened by Evelyn's acceptance of her husband's sacrifice.)

The *dénouement* is left to the reader.

DETAILS. Carefully study the circumstances preceding the initial impulse of the story action noting the details of preparation. For example, the "national colors merged with those of the allied nations" (page

391); "Rumor credited to him at least one of the deadliest chemical combinations" (page 392); "There's a sort of grace given, I fancy" (page 396); "Sacrifice, Mrs. Colcord" (page 397) deepening the note of patriotism.

Whose angle of narration is used? Does the author anywhere depart from it, preferring his own angle? Does he anywhere seem to turn from the angle of the chosen one, putting her under the spot-light, instead? If you find these shifts, can you justify them by showing that the author makes a gain greater than the loss he sustains? If he makes no shift, how does he widen the narrow range afforded only one person?

By what preparation does Mr. Perry create the needed impression that the Colcords were fully aware of the sacrifice involved? (Note, especially, the preparation in Evelyn's response to Latham's comment, page 393, . . . "you make me shiver!")

Page 405: "He raised a thin forefinger and levelled it along the table." What image is called up?

By what detailed description and exposition does Mr. Perry make you "believe," at least momentarily, that Simec had really invented the appliance?

What locale is suggested, outside the immediate setting? Does it matter, in a narrative of this kind?

GENERAL. Mr. Perry's views should be spread abroad to all who would master the art of story writing. "No art is rarer, or more difficult of attainment. . . . First there is the plot. I think the good short story demands a plot. Stylistic writing designed to atone for the lack of a definite idea, or to stand in lieu of a definitely worked out plot is not to my way of thinking a pure short story. There must be a plot, a plot peculiar to itself and peculiar to the medium in which it is set forth. Very rarely, I believe, may the perfect short story plot be adapted to any other vehicle. Nine times out of ten it would not serve as the motif of the play, the novel, the film or the sketch. The piece of short

fiction, thus, is *sui generis*. Again the scope is limited. There may be no leisurely characterization, no extended dissertation; descriptions are admissible only where they assist in carrying on the action — or at least do not interfere with it — and in the telling of the tale there is no place in the scheme for aught save the ultimate objective.

“ Thus carried out and presented in type we have something which we may regard as the polished gem of literature, establishing a mood in the reader out of all proportion to its size — and perhaps its importance. For the short story very largely is designed for entertainment, and rarely bears the moral purpose of the great novel or the didactic intent of the essay.

“ I say ‘very largely.’ There are, of course, short stories written with a purpose — some great ones — but that purpose is best realized when the essential characteristics of the story form are observed, when the reader in other words feels whatever emotions, or grasps whatever lesson the writer intended to convey, through the medium of a strong, deeply marked plot carried with precision from situation to clash to dénouement.”—  
*Lawrence Perry.*

## THE PATH OF GLORY

STARTING POINT AND FIRST PROCESSES. "It so happens in the case of 'The Path of Glory' that I can give you exactly the germinal idea from which the story sprang. Three months before I wrote it a friend put into my hand two letters. The first was written by Piatt Andrew of The American Ambulance at Paris and gave the full details of a wonderful funeral accorded a young American volunteer driver who was killed on an early trip; the second was the last personal letter of the young man to his family — the letter of a young man of education and breeding and in no way similar to the Nat letter of my story save as they both expressed a fundamental human longing. Copies were being made and I was offered some. I carried mine home and laid them by. But they haunted me. 'There's a story there,' I thought. However, I didn't seem to get a story — at once. Nevertheless my mind played with the letters. That funeral! The story of course lay there, but how to set it off, enhance it properly. One day thinking it over idly — I have a vagabond mind and never attack a problem in any logical fashion — the solution dawned quite suddenly. It would be best set off by contrast, of course, with some unthinkably shabby funeral, and would receive its greatest force by being reconstructed through the minds of a people to whom a funeral is a precious event."— *Mary Brecht Pulver*.

After a statement to the effect that she knows "people to whom the trappings and ceremonials of death take on a sense of privilege," Mrs. Pulver continues:

"Just here I got some paper and a pencil and wrote the story. Or rather it wrote itself — as my stories

usually do. When I began describing the lonely farm in which my people lived I had not the least idea who the people were—how many, what sex, age, race, or previous condition of servitude. There was a family in that house. A family preferably in hard luck. Then at the foot of the hill I saw a lame boy driving a cow. I walked along with him—and recognizing him as Luke, and acquainting myself with his ideas and frame of mind, I knew of course who his people were, how many, their habits, their names—‘all’s to it,’ as Luke would have said.

“And so I told their story—and about how one of them went to France and got killed. And how indirectly he helped them out of their hard luck. That is all there was to ‘The Path of Glory.’”

PLOR. Note, first, that since the presentation is consistently from Luke’s angle, the plot events are given in chronological order *for him*; but that from the point of view of actual occurrence they are presented with some inversion. (For example, the experience of Mrs. Haynes in the town precedes her summary to Luke.) In this respect, the author—perhaps unconsciously—shows ability to mass plot material to best advantage through artistic adherence to one angle of narration. Many short-story writers appear to understand this principle, yet fail to master it.

*Initial Impulse:* The story impulse lies, dormant, in the business of Matt’s funeral. Where does it become active?

*Main Steps in Action:* Nat’s visit home. A direct forecast of the climax lies in the reason for his going to Europe. Another important stage is the death and burial of Father Haynes, “Paw.”

*Dramatic Climax:* The combination of “Paw’s” home-made burial and Nat’s death. The two come near together and constitute the lowest turn of the Haynes wheel of fortune. In Nat’s death lies the possibility for change. (In the presentation of

the plot, this climax is *reported* through the letter, the reception of which is, in itself, a step toward the *climax of action*.)

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* The letter telling of Nat's death. Mrs. Haynes's stony grief. The second letter: Nat's funeral and the *croix de guerre*. "Maw" awakes; she is "going downtown." She shows the letter, and soon understands that Nat has given glory to Stony Brook. The letter is to be published. It is to be read aloud at the schoolhouse and Nat's story retold. There will be a memorial service at the churches. There will be a big public service in the Town Hall. (Other details make the change of fortune explicit and complete.)

*Climax of Action:* "Maw" returns home, rehabilitated, and rehearses the day's experience to Luke. He recognizes that Nat has done "somethin' big for us all."

CHARACTERS. If one test of the "short-story" is that no character should enter who does not assist in the action, will this story stand it? What, for example, is Tom's part? Would you give him up? Is it permissible to introduce characters to enrich the action? There is no question about the value from a literary consideration.

The part of each main character is well-defined. Luke, self-conscious, lame and sensitive, offers the medium through whom the story is told. "Maw" suffers; it is she to whom the turns of fortune mean most; she is the chief character. "Paw" is the cause of the Haynes status in the community. Nat, the prodigal, is the one through whom rehabilitation comes.

The personalities that enrich the action are: 1. Clem, his wife, and S'norta. They do so (a) by intensifying "Maw's" sense of poverty, (b) by furnishing contrast in worldly goods and in character; 2. Tom. His mis-

fortune enhances the wretchedness of the main actors, and the probability of his being made sound in mind emphasizes their changed fortunes. 3. Background characters. All, practically, whom Mrs. Haynes meets on her famous day in the town.

Apply to these primary and secondary characters the tests suggested in previous exercises. Do they *live*?

SETTING. What does "Stony Brook, New York" suggest by way of physical and spiritual conditions? How is the locality an integral part of the atmosphere?

DETAILS. The "human appeal" in this narrative will make it hard for any reader, however crusty, to refrain from tears or an awakened sense of pity. By what measures has the author brought about this desired result? The list should be long. After you have made it, see how far you can generalize from it as to provocation of emotional reaction.

"What I like in reading a story," Mrs. Pulver says, "is a simple gracious English, a shade whimsical perhaps, that concerns itself with a situation and people who palpitate, in whose fate you become sincerely interested, as humans, not merely a clever bit of literary bridge. And the whole must be laced for me with a dash of humor, that tender fun-poking that will save the written human appeal from being heart-throb stuff or the handiwork of a sob-sister."

Some examples of contrast have already been offered. Point out others, even stronger.

In Division II (pages 421-425) the focus is on Nat, the action seemingly held up, meanwhile. Did you, in reading, feel this long delay to be irksome, or were you compensated by the matter itself and the vision of its promise?

In Division IV, what intensifying value has the rain?

In Division V, what intensifying value has the first sentence?—"It was dusk when Maw came back; dusk of a clear day, with a rosy sunset off behind the hills."

GENERAL. Mary Brecht Pulver declares she is afraid



she is that "hooted-at and disbelieved-in thing," an inspirational writer. "Given a major premise, an argument, some slight flash of idea, for a chart and I am ready to sail over the smooth white main. My crew will come to me ready named, ready behaved, and will navigate my bark for me. . . . All of my stories are pictures. They unroll like a cinema in colors just off my left shoulder. They move so fast my wrist aches to keep up with them. I never rewrite anything unless an editor requests it. My first draft is the only one. As you see, this is not intellectual but emotional work. I can do only a thousand words at a sitting because of the emotional strain. This seems deplorable, considering the product but it seems necessary. Like the Jap in the legend, I must mix a little blood with my clay to get any kind of pottery."

At first, this passage would seem to say, "There's no use trying to learn to write." And it may be urged here that the young fiction aspirant who feels *impelled* to create, and according to his own bent, should give his genius a full chance. Any student may glean this, however, from the words of Mrs. Pulver: Without emotion of one's own, success is impossible.

## EXTRA MEN

**STARTING POINT.** "Somewhere I read in the summer of 1917 a reference to a legend of either a poor saint living as a hermit or a holy abbess (I can't really remember which) who entertained a company of horsemen one night. In the morning the field where the horses had grazed was untouched and the realization came that a troop of angels had been that way. I am sorry not to be more definite as to this source.

"Washington and the war are wholly of my own invention, and the miracle of the meadow grass became incidental as I wrote the story, which I had at first planned to call 'The Green Meadow.' As to the actual processes of invention I should say no one can quite explain the least important of them."—*Harrison Rhodes*.

**CLASSIFICATION.** On concluding "Extra Men" if a reader asks, "What is its purpose?" he will reply in substance, to his self-query: "To convey the thought that spirits of our heroic dead support the boys at the front." Theme is dominant. "I cannot say that I believe in the supernatural or miracles," Mr. Rhodes states, "but I believe the story of 'Extra Men' to be essentially and symbolically true."

**PLOT.** Plot sinks, therefore, into comparative insignificance. A single incident serves to convey the truth. Whereas the miracle of the meadow grass might have been the chief event, its purpose here is rather that of a detail, substantiating the visit.

**CHARACTERS.** The spirit of George Washington is the main character of the incident. Since, however, it is fitting that the past be subordinated to the present (in conformity with the author's purpose), the old lady is

introduced previous to the story-action, and is, therefore, the main figure of the entire narrative.

Notice the suggestive method used in identifying the spirit of Washington—nowhere is he openly named. For example, he speaks of Arlington, “the house which once belonged to a relative of mine”; and says elsewhere, “You would not now know Valley Forge.”

Mrs. Buchan was favored with the visit not by accident. The motivation for it is unobtrusively and perhaps even unconsciously conveyed, but none the less with potency. How has the author enlisted sympathy for her?

What is the rôle of young Buchan? Is there a reason for his name —“George”?

What plot value has Al Fenton, “the farmer”?

SETTING. The scene is important, since nowhere else could the action have occurred with equal fitness. “The quaint name” of the hamlet at once calls up the historic episode of Washington crossing the Delaware.

ATMOSPHERE. The realistic mood of the story contributes to its power of conviction.

## THE WAITING YEARS

**CLASSIFICATION.** This short-story illustrates grouping for sake of climactic effect. Events of forty years are illuminated by the happenings of a day. The narrative has both an outer and an inner action.

**PLOT.** The plot of the combined inner and outer story is quite simple. The *initial impulse* consists of Mark Faraday's interest in Miss Allison Clyde. The *dramatic climax*, if such it may be called, lies in the finding of the love-letters which his Uncle William had written and never sent to Allison. The *climax of action* is his handing the package of letters to Allison.

The inner plot is found in the letters. The *initial impulse* of William's love for Allison operates until the *dramatic climax*. This dramatic climax is William's knowledge that he must die and his feeling that he must never speak again to Allison of his passion. Up to the *climax of action* (his death) his letters have the note of renunciation; before the dramatic climax they looked to union with the girl he adored.

The two parts are linked in William's giving the package to Allison. Would you have been satisfied to see him read them without passing them on to her? Are you satisfied to construct your own dénouement—Allison's emotion, etc.?

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Since development or deterioration of character is difficult to indicate within the compass of the short-story, this specimen shows a distinct advantage in massing the incidents near the climax. For Allison may be shown finished, perfect,—the lovely "personage," to quote the oracle, Mrs. Herrick,—whom Mark finds. At the same time, her development is made

logical by the emphasis on her youthful beauty of mind and heart as her lover saw it. Study, in the usual way, the many methods by which Mrs. Roof has made vivid her portrait. Mark's point of view regarding her is particularly good; also, the foil, Stella, serves adequately to set her off. Observe, too, the relation she bears to her setting, her fitness for it.

Since Mark is the one through whom the reader learns the facts of the action, his mind is open to the reader's vision. Is there too much of the artist about him, not enough of the man? Would you have him different? Is he the nephew of his uncle, from a consideration of sentiment?

What effect is produced by the names, in connection with their owners? — Mark, Stella, Allison, William?

DETAILS. What is the intensifying worth of the sun-dial? Of the buzzing bee? A second line of interest may be said to lie in the music theme, which intensifies the line of the love interest and Mark's interest in Miss Allison.

Do you feel jarred or pleased by the shift to Allison's angle (in her letter, page 204)?

Does Mark too easily come across the daguerreotype, or does the casual manner of his finding it fit into the smooth and leisurely progress of the story?

Why is the picture of Allison "standing by the tall mantle in the candle-light" one that lingers? Why does one remember the picture of Beatrix (in "Henry Esmond") coming down the stairs in white, with cherry colored ribbons, holding the candle in her hand?

Do the letters of William strike you as having been composed by a man or a woman? Why?

## ZELIG

CLASSIFICATION. "Zelig" is a character story, with decided emphasis on the character. There is just enough plot to lift it from the realm of the sketch into that of the narrative.

PLOT. The *struggle* lies in Zelig's attempt to save sufficient money for returning to Russia. It is unsuccessful.

What is the *initial impulse*, the first hint of a story motive?

The dramatic climax is preceded by a minor one: the death of Zelig's son. The real turning point, the *dramatic climax*, is made up of the wife's statements (page 224), the most important of which is the reference to the son's death.

The *climax of action* and the *dénouement* fall together in the final speech of the story, being suggested rather than stated.

CHARACTERIZATION. The old man is characterized by the author's description (the direct method, so called); by the summary of what his brethren felt and said (combination of direct and indirect methods); by the opinion his fellow-workmen held of him; and by Zelig's own acts and speeches in addition to his habitual manner. Has he the greater part of the stage for most of the time? Purpose of his wife? Son? Grandson? Of the background characters?

SETTING. "New York's East Side." The second value of the story lies in the setting. Indeed, the character value would be lost without it, and the unification is therefore noteworthy. Is the setting made contributory to atmosphere, also?

DETAILS. Are you satisfied with the ending? Is the sense of tragedy at the failure of the human element striving against circumstance relieved by the recognition of Zelig's rehabilitation, or revivification? Has he, in a deeper sense, conquered in that he has conquered self?

GENERAL METHODS. That Benjamin Rosenblatt creates his characters, not "lifting" them from life, is manifest in his statement: "As to Zelig, I really haven't met any one just like him, so that I couldn't have had any individual case before my mind's eye when I wrote the story."

## THE MENORAH

**STARTING POINT.** "A few years ago I passed one of the congested East Side streets just when a fire broke out in one of the tenements. I saw climbing down the fire escapes of the burning building a very old Jewess dragging some of her belongings with her. Among these belongings was a pair of old-fashioned, common-place candlesticks used for 'Sabbath blessing.' That started me on the way to 'The Menorah.'"—*Benjamin Rosenblatt.*

**CLASSIFICATION.** "The Menorah" offers itself as a fit companion-piece to "Zelig." In the latter, the setting is New York, the character is an old man, the struggle is successfully unsuccessful. In this, the setting is "a little town in Russia," the chief character is an old woman, the struggle is successfully unsuccessful. It is to be remarked that the two settings are equally well-known to Mr. Rosenblatt.

**PLOT.** The *struggle* is on Lea's part to preserve appearances in her rapidly deteriorating circumstances, to find a match for her daughter, and to keep the Menorah. The last is the most important. Although she fails, she does so in a way to relieve the reader's distress at her failing.

A *minor climax* is in the death of the younger girl.

The *dramatic climax* is the securing of the proper young man as bridegroom for her daughter.

With the dramatic climax is bound up the *climax of action* (of the largest struggle): the Menorah must be sold.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** The story is told, as was "Zelig," from the omniscient author's point of view with the



omniscience exercised over the chief character. Study the portrayal of Lea, as you were recommended to study that of Zelig. What is the purpose of Reb Schloime? Compare him with "Paw" Haynes in "The Path of Glory" as to his function.

DETAILS. These two stories by Benjamin Rosenblatt perform a service for the Jewish people, in rationalizing the desire for money, a desire about which volumes have been written. It is to be observed in these narratives that the possession of worldly treasure in each case is secondary to another ideal. In Lea's case it is her love for her ancestors and their glory joined to a sensitiveness at the fall in her worldly station. What is the primary ideal in "Zelig"?

What clue to the disposal of the candelabrum occurs earlier in the narrative?

What national and racial customs intensify the setting?

"To me, a narrative that has for its aim to interest the reader in its plot is an anecdote, be its plot ever so thick. A narrative that aims to interest the reader in a slice of palpitating life — the joys or sorrows of people — be its plot ever so thin, I call it a short story."—*Benjamin Rosenblatt*.

## THE SURVIVORS

**CLASSIFICATION.** This work, and the following one, "Penance" might be characterized as stories that are short, rather than short-stories. If the point were argued, however, it might be said that because of the situation, the theme quality, and the historic interest, all of which contribute to unity of effect, the two are outlying specimens of the *genre*. The time of the action, here, is forty years. So it is in "The Waiting Years" (Page 172), but whereas there the time of the action is only twenty-four hours (see the management) here it is the full forty.

### PLOT.

**Initial Incident:** The initial impulse of the struggle lies in the unseen, and therefore unreturned, wave of Adam's hand. The *struggle* lies in Adam's own soul. He holds out against the friendly overtures of Henry at the same time he desires Henry to ask him for something. He wishes a position of superiority. Is the termination of the struggle successful?

**Steps toward Dramatic Climax:** Fill in the chief incidents occurring in the forty-year period. Do they form part of the transition? Why does the author emphasize the time element?

**Dramatic Climax:** Ed Green's being kept in bed is really the turning situation, since it means that Henry must walk alone, and Adam will have his long desired opportunity of serving Henry.

What are the immediate steps preceding the climax of action?

*Climax of Action:* "Henry's face blanched . . . Henry's step faltered and grew uncertain."

*Dénouement:* Adam joins Henry: they walk together.

**THEME.** It arrives fully in the reader's understanding the significance of the dénouement, or seeing in it a symbolic unity between North and South.

**DETAILS.** What trait of human nature is displayed in Adam? Is it consistent in its operations?

What is the setting? What integrative worth has it? How greatly does the possibility of a "story," in the first place, depend upon it?

## PENANCE

**CLASSIFICATION.** See classification of "The Survivors." Here the elements all work toward unity of effect: even the thirty year period contributes to the same unity. It is even necessary to the working out of the penance. (Could it have been massed in such a way as to give the reader the same consciousness of retribution as it here conveys?) But the length of the action is not the length of the best short-story action.

"Penance" provides an interesting companion-piece to "The Survivors." Notice that whereas in the former instance the *initial incident* was separated by the long space from the turning point of the action; here the plot is completed except for the fact that Buckingham's understanding (the *dénouement*) comes after thirty years.

**PLOT.** The *initial impulse* lies in Buckingham's interest in Minnie.

Fill in the steps that follow immediately, culminating in

*The Dramatic Climax:* Minnie detains Buckingham.

Fill in the steps that precede

*The Climax of Action:* Buckingham loses the battle: the tide of war is turned.

*Steps toward Dénouement:* They consist in a summary of the penance. What contributory value has the idea ". . . she kept before his eyes the girl's eyes" (page 292)? After thirty years he returns to the battlefield.

*Dénouement:* Buckingham learns of the trick to detain him.

DETAILS. What is your opinion of Buckingham? By what methods did you receive the data on which you base it?

Where is the guide (page 292) first mentioned? Why is this an instance of good workmanship?

Is it better that Minnie drop out of the story, not to reappear?

"Minnie stood on the stairway and looked down at him, the light from the candle in her hand flickering over her." (Page 287.) See the query on "The Waiting Years," page 173.

## FEET OF GOLD

**CLASSIFICATION.** This is one of a series of stories centering around the life of Ferdinand Taillandy, a lovable hero akin to William J. Locke's "Beloved Vagabond" and "Aristide Pujol." In such a series it is not necessary or even desirable that the short-story type be sought. All the narratives, from start to finish, as a complete series, are more likely to reveal a general structure culminating in a climax (which will probably require a whole story) than any one of them is likely to possess definite and clear-cut mechanism.

The three necessary stages of narrative, according to Aristotle, are beginning, middle and end. These stages, as to action, are well-defined in the present story. But one feels at the beginning that here is a hero brought over from a preceding adventure, as one knows at the end that he is off for new experiences. Is the action in regard to Diane complete?

### PLOT.

*Initial Incident:* Taillandy meets Diane. No particular struggle is initiated, however. Taillandy merely takes Diane under his protection, here in Paris, and after some days leaves with her in a two-wheeled cart.

*Climax of Action:* Diane is restored to her mother; Taillandy again becomes a wanderer.

*Body of Story:* Among the chief points of interest are Taillandy's reversion to the *boulevardier* type, and his writing the poem inspired by Diane. Mention others.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** For what reasons do you like Taillandy? Wherein lies the significance of "Feet of

Gold"? Read the final story in this series, "At the End of the Road," and observe whether the author has kept Taillandy's character consistent. Take note of the characters who know Taillandy in the present narrative, observe the feeling each has for him, and see how well Mr. Smith has used their opinions to emphasize Taillandy's character as described. What does Taillandy think of each of the other characters?

By what means has the author chiefly pictured Diane? How has she been enhanced by the two settings? What interaction have character and setting throughout the story?

DETAILS. What value has the following statement as compared with the more direct one, "Taillandy was generous"?

"Of that thousand francs Taillandy spent seven hundred and ninety-six during the next four days — ninety-six, possibly, on himself, and the balance on his friends."

What other characteristic is implied, also?

Study the management of suspense (pages 313, 314, 315). Why are you held waiting?

Why (on page 317) did Taillandy whisper to the driver?

Why (page 298) did Diane weep at the mention of Madame Nicolas's name?

What place references keep the locale before you?

How in the speeches and manner of the characters are you kept aware of the French race?

## SOLITAIRE

STARTING POINT. "You ask about the origin of 'Solitaire,' which chances to be rather easier to trace than the origin of most of the stories I have written, since I more often begin with an abstract 'idea' and work outward to character and plot. When a story begins otherwise I have discovered (and all such things are matters of discovery after the fact, and never of premeditation) that it is almost invariably the result of some purely *visual* impression of a single person, detached from any incident or complication. A stranger, seen once, who recurs again and again to my mind, and about whom my curiosity increases, I have learned to rely upon, in a kind of occult unstatable way, to bring home his own plot.

"The opening scene of 'Solitaire' is an exact transcript of one of those visual impressions. I did see the man who afterward became 'Corey' in the restaurant of a small Paris hotel. My vis-à-vis did say, 'Look at the American!' and I did turn to meet the twinkle I have described in the story. The curious thing is that I cannot now remember whether he wore a decorative ribbon or not. My impression is that he did not, for it was not until several weeks later that the idea of decorations as a 'motive' occurred to me. What mattered, what really roused my curiosity, was my *surprise* at seeing him there, when I knew nothing at all about the man,—my immediate sense of his playing a strange rôle, of his being away from home. He *was* a physician, he had been working in the Balkans, and he was going back again the next day. Also he had been in Russia. These things he told me after dinner in the salon, when we talked together; and



he was from the Middle West, and called it 'God's country' and said he wanted to get back. I did not see him after that night, but he kept coming into my mind, and each time I would wonder how he had ever come into my mind, and each time I would wonder how he had ever come to leave his home in the Middle West, and in the end it became, I suppose, a kind of subconscious abstract problem. At any rate the solution appeared one day—and all I had then to do was to write the story. So, after all, it was a story of 'idea' worked out to plot,—but a visual impression put the idea into my head. One thing only, I believe, I knew all the time,—that whatever his motive was, he was as much in the dark about it as I. That, perhaps, was what attracted me, what kept my curiosity alive, and what, in the end, made it an acceptable story."—*Fleta Campbell Springer.*

PLOT. Unsheathed from the tissue of its presentation, the essential plot of this character story is as follows:

*Initial Impulse:* Dr. Jim Corey, of Dubuque, Iowa, happening to be in China at the time of the Boxer Rebellion wins, by his medical skill, the Japanese Order of the Rising Sun, and the French ribbon of the Legion of Honor.

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* Corey returns to his home, simple and unaffected. Afterward, though always off to one of the far corners of the earth, he comes back with the same indifference to his decorations. Once or twice only he displays them, in a spirit of comic masquerade or to please his friends. In 1912 he takes part in the Balkan campaign, and happens to meet in Paris, where he goes for anaesthetics, the *narrator* of the present story. (Not the *author*, it will be noticed.) On his return to Dubuque in the spring of 1913 he marries. Essentially a home man and now settled down, he seemingly feels no inclination at the outbreak of the World War to get to France. In August, 1915, how-

ever, he goes to Philadelphia, where he supposedly remains for two months, conducting experiments. In reality, he sails for France, goes to the front, and in six weeks wins the Croix de Guerre. He returns home, as if from Philadelphia.

*Dramatic Climax:* After some weeks his wife finding the Croix de Guerre and learning the truth, accuses him of being unable to resist a new decoration. Corey's faith in himself and the honesty of his past is destroyed.

*Steps toward Climax of Action:* Corey, in distress, makes a confessor of his relative, Mr. Ewing. He seems convinced that he is "rotten" and has been, without knowing it. Shortly, he leaves again, and it is given out that he has gone to France to help in the war. At the front he exposes himself to every danger; meantime, on duty and off he wears his array of decorations. It is noteworthy that nobody sees anything "funny" in them, however. Volunteering to rescue a wounded officer, he is mortally injured, and the two are brought to the relief station together.

*Climax of Action Scene:* The officer, while Corey is unconscious, tells how Corey shielded him at the expense of his own life. He manages to despatch a note to General Headquarters. Corey regains consciousness and calls for his friend Burke, to whom he dictates Mr. Ewing's name and address. Burke, hearing that the Medaille Militaire is to be conferred upon Corey, tells him. Corey hearing that three hours will be required remarks, "That's time enough." He desires Mr. Ewing to know that "It breaks a man's luck to know what he wants," and that he did not take the hypodermic which would have kept him alive until the conferring of the Medaille Militaire. He wishes his wife to hear nothing about the honor he might have had at the last.

*Dénouement:* The Division General arrives too

late to confer the medal. Corey had saved his wife this added disgrace.

**PRESENTATION.** The facts of the plot, extending over a long time, are unified through the device of the narrator who, first becoming curious about Corey and enlisting the reader's curiosity, learns them from Mr. Ewing. Ewing, then, becomes an inner narrator, and his story, in turn, encloses that of Burke. The skill of the author is manifest in the process by which she has so interwoven the various pieces of information about Corey as to make a smooth and perfectly joined story. The element of Chance plays a strong part, but so natural a rôle that it meets with no lack of credulity. That is, Chance caused the first meeting, but since in that *contre-temps* lies the base of the story, it is accepted. Chance also causes the meeting between the narrator and the only man, perhaps, who could have given the facts about Corey's career. But it is naturally brought about, through the setting and the preliminaries antecedent to the recognition that here was some one who knew Corey.

Do you anywhere feel that the narrator is a woman? Is the narrator's delicacy in the smoking car, for example, greater than a man would have felt? Would a man apologize for hearing the story.

**CHARACTER.** The story exemplifies to an unusual degree the unity which results from emphasizing one character. Every other is ancillary to Corey. Even his wife is but a human means for bringing home to his own consciousness the question as to his motives. The others exist mainly as links between the reader and Corey. The interest in the physician, for the reader, lies in speculating over his acts, his whereabouts, and the opposing forces of his nature. In the end, it is seen that he has been all along a single-hearted American, one who followed his nature, but who, when his attention was drawn to the sort of nature it appeared to be, determined upon a course of punishment. The title of the story

strengthens this interpretation. The summary episode of the Western miner strengthens it: if the miner cheated at solitaire he shot himself. Corey felt that he had cheated unaware and set himself to the task of flagellation.

**SETTING.** The contrast between the Middle West and France emphasizes the apparent contradictory qualities in Corey's nature. The shift in settings is in itself conducive to unity and short-story effect only through contrast; but the rehearsed method of telling the story, with the accent on Corey, properly subordinates the divergence in locality and swings it into harmony.

Fleta Campbell Springer thinks a short-story is whatever the author makes it. "That is why I believe in it, in its possibilities. The very fact that you can't put your finger on it, can't ticket it, or define it, is its fascination. Its limits are the limits of the author's ability, and there are several kinds of authors in the world. The word 'short-story' is sufficient definition in itself, length being the only quality to come under restriction."

## THE YELLOW CAT

Mr. Steele's twelve or fifteen years of studying the technique of story writing have resulted in his mastering the power of suggestion, found at its height in Kipling, and the clear vigorous expression for which Stevenson is famous. Without a statement to the contrary from the author himself it would be safe to assume that they were his models.

"The Yellow Cat" is told in the first person by Ridgeway, aided by McCord, and it is in part created by the reader. One who likes to create with ease will find a strain upon his powers of construction; the more he takes his reading as a narcotic, the less he will enjoy it. The constructive reader will delight in it.

As a change from the analysis of plot in the presentation, it will be profitable to construct the events in chronological order.

A. The master of the *Abbie Rose* fears his Chinaman cook; he enters his fear in his log, intimating that he may do away with the Chinaman.

B. The second seaman, Bach, also becomes a victim of fear. The two men find that their revolvers are stolen.

C. (Invented by every reader to suit himself. Perhaps the two seamen deserted the ship?)

D. The Chinaman is left on board. (Is he innocent?) He climbs into the shrouds, when he sees the smoke of an approaching vessel.

E. The vessel is descried, soon after C, or D, by the *Mercury*. (. . . "the stove in the galley still slightly warm.") It is seemingly empty but for a yellow cat.

F. McCord and Björnsen are detailed to steer the

## 190 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

*Abbie Rose* to port, over a hundred miles distant. McCord is the engineer.

G. Björnsen, going to shake out the foretopsail encounters the Chinaman.

H. (Invented by the reader. Björnsen was probably knocked into the sea, and may have made his escape to the land. Was he killed?)

I. McCord missing Björnsen, and becoming obsessed by the yellow cat, begins to consider the theory of transmigration of souls.

J. (Suggested to the reader: McCord thinking the Chinaman is dead — for he has read the log entries — suspects that his soul has come back in the body of the cat.)

K. He undergoes a period of mental agony, during which time he brings the vessel into port. He sees the shadow of the Chinaman; he shoots at the shadow; he misses the water, etc. He cannot sleep and the cat has disappeared.

(Note that all the incidents above are of the time preceding the "acting time" of the story, or the immediate situation and action.)

L. The narrator, Ridgeway, here comes on board the vessel lying in the upper river.

M. As the men talk, McCord relating his experiences, the cat re-appears.

N. She hears a sound, rushes amidships, and the men follow.

O. They look aloft. (See page 255, top.)

P. (Suggested: McCord sees something in the shroud.)

Q. (Suggested: He shakes down the Chinaman.)

R. The Chinaman escapes, leaving his slipper.

S. McCord from the mast brings down the two revolvers and other things.

T. McCord now understands the whole business; he goes to sleep at once.

Such an order would have spoiled the story. Notice in the presentation:

1. The gathering up of the greater part of the incidents at the shortest possible distance from the climax of action.

2. The economical and dramatic method by which the preceding circumstances are set forth. The reader knows only what McCord knows.

3. The large employment of suggestion.

4. The keeping of the place — the boat is the scene of action for three different groups, only the last group being the immediate actors.

5. The excellent clues to the shrouds as the hiding place. (See pages 237, . . . "top-sails being pursed up . . . but not stowed"; 238, . . . "handing down like huge, over-ripe pears," etc.)

6. The logic of McCord's not finding the hiding place of the cook. (First sentence, page 255.) This illustrates Poe's theory as set forth in "The Purloined Letter."

7. The use of suspense. The reader wonders whether the explanation will lie in the supernatural or the natural. Suspense is satisfied only in the dénouement, after which the end comes quickly.

8. The motivation for the whole story. It lies in *fear*: "the one universal and uncontrollable passion." And it is heightened by placing in opposition representatives of two races, neither of which understands the other. Here, then, is the real *struggle*.

## DOWN ON THEIR KNEES

**CLASSIFICATION.** This is, primarily, a love story, having a strongly marked struggle between the first and second characters, and a complicating thread of interest drawn from the relations between the first and third characters. It is of the familiar "triangle" type, but of a unique individuality.

The struggle appears to be motivated by something like hate; but the dénouement reveals that the acts resulting from apparent hatred or contempt were only negative or distorted expressions of the real or positive passion.

**PRESENTATION.** The narrator is the author (third person), who focuses the spot-light on Angel.

**PLOT.** Analyze the plot, marking out the main steps. What is the turning point in the struggle, or the dramatic climax?

Compare the manipulation of the plot elements with the management of those in "The Yellow Cat" plot. Which is simpler?

**SETTING.** Among the Portuguese on Urkey Island. The time is the present.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** The racial type chosen is one, through which passionate and contradictory expression might well flow. A colder-tempered, more logical people, would here be impossible. Or if individuals of the milder tempered race were chosen, the task of making them convincing (as a group) would be an added difficulty.

What impression of Peter Um Perna do you receive at first? By what method or methods of portrayal is this impression conveyed?

Where is the second Peter, his second self, first re-



vealed? Where in full? What is the significance of the relationship of the one who explains him?

What is the chief trait of Angel? How is your opinion of her maintained or changed? At what point, and why, does she leave off caring for Man'el?

What marked characteristics of Peter and Man'el are contrasted? (See e.g., page 329: "Yeh!" He had planned to lie about that.")

What is the value of the older characters — the Avo and Mena?

Why are the life-savers numbered 1, 2, 5 and so on?

DETAILS. Is there anywhere a clue to Angel's love for Peter? To his for her?

Wherein lies the element of suspense? Where is your curiosity first satisfied? What becomes a new cause for reading on? How is suspense increased near the final outcome?

Why at first reading are you not sure of the place at which Angel no longer loves Man'el? What purpose of the author leads him to leave the reader doubtful?

What vividness is given to the description of the setting, in the first paragraph?

What plot convenience exists in the Avo being Peter's laundress?

How is the name Philomena used? In what other story of these collections do you find it similarly *non-descriptive*?

Why is the title "Down on *Their* Knees"?

What indications in this story, in the way of color and form, do you find of Mr. Steele's being also an artist of the brush?

What plot purpose does Man'el perform in his dare to Peter, to "go fishin'"? Does he serve to get the situation over the *impasse*? Is it a too obvious trick?

The struggle in the last lap of the action is one against the elements. What are the two subdivisions of this struggle? Is the outcome satisfactory? What symbolic value has the final sentence?

## CHING, CHING, CHINAMAN

**PRESENTATION.** The story is told in reminiscent vein by one who uses his own angle as a boy. It recalls the manner of "Treasure Island," as "The Yellow Cat" recalls Kipling. The boy's angle is faithfully kept, with excellent results. The first value of the boy's angle is that much of the action was unclear to him, as it progressed chronologically, and this obscurity is carried over to the reader. The reader, then, is kept in suspense, as the boy was, until the outcome. It is a well-known and capital means of creating and heightening suspense. The second value is that the boy's point of view is the best for unity of effect. Observe that this is true in studying the

### PLOT.

*Initial Incident:* Malden marries Sympathy Gibbs, whom Mate Snow has been considering for himself. This incident motivates the chain of events that follow.

(The following is revealed out of chronological order, as the plot is *presented*. But as effect resulting from cause it follows, in the plot *construction*, the initial incident):

*First Steps toward Dramatic Climax:* Mate Snow writes in the name of Gibbs, to Minister Malden, saying he is alive. "Gibbs" demands money as a reward for his silence and non-appearance. Malden, unable to bear the thought of his child being a bastard, meets the demand. He further agrees to stay away from his wife and child. (Do you think the motivation is strong enough, under the given conditions, to make the Minister do

this?) Sam Kow, a Chinaman sees the exchange of letter and money.

*Next Steps:* (These are revealed at first reading, but cause wonder and suspense, as the *preceding* steps are unknown to the boy and to the reader):

Malden leaves Sympathy and his baby and lives with Mate Snow, occupying two rooms over the drug store.

The village wonders but Mate Snow seemingly takes the part of Malden. Nobody, of course, suspects his villainy.

The Minister tries to "convert" Yen Sin, the Chinaman, and motivation for this struggle goes back to the antecedent period (first paragraphs) when the minister had voyaged to heathen shores to work in "the field." (Notice the reason given for his return, and observe that the earthly and divine loves were even then at odds in his make-up.)

*Step in Chronological Order* (but held back until the outcome): Yen Sin receives collars from Sam Kow on which Sam informs him of the exchange of letters and money. This correspondence keeps up for seven years.

*Further Steps:* Yen Sin keeps his own reserve and his own religion.

One evening Minister Malden fails to show up at prayer-meeting. Mate Snow presides. The boy creeps off to the pillar-house, where Sympathy lives. He sees

1. That Minister Malden enters. 2. That Yen Sin also sees. The boy makes a visit of a month. He returns to find Mate Snow the big man of the village. Yen Sin has grown older and feebler.

*Dramatic Climax:* Yen Sin is dying; he asks for the Minister. (It is from the Chinaman's death that the change of Malden's fortunes arises.)

Steps following immediately, and leading directly to climax of action.—The boy enters the church to

see Snow in the pulpit; he stammers out the Chinaman's need for the Minister. Snow answers the call. The boy hates Snow; he continues to look for Malden. He goes to the pillar house. He looks beneath a drawn shade and sees Malden receiving five hundred dollars from Sympathy; he hears her say, "It brings us to the end, Will." He hears the Minister thanking God it's Mate Snow who holds the mortgage. But Sympathy declares that Mate has "sucked the life" out of Malden. The boy screams out that the Chinaman is dying. Then he rushes off to the scow of Yen Sin. Now follows the struggle of wills, and of races; Chinaman is pitted against American, in the

*Impulse of Final Suspense:* The boy hears Snow enjoining the Chinaman to confess. Yen Sin calls for his collars, and as they lie curling about him, he mildly asks for Snow's confession. Snow finally confesses, "I have coveted my neighbor's wife." Here Malden enters. He reveals that Gibbs is alive, and to save his child, he has paid hush-money. (See above.) He has promised to stay away from wife and child, but has gone to them in secret. This is his confession. Then Yen Sin reveals what Sam Kow has written from Infield—on the collars—Malden has paid money. . . . Here Snow goes mad, fearing exposure, and blurts out enough to show it is he who has demanded the money. Yen Sin points out that at any time "Mista God" would have accepted confession, "makee allee light." Minister Malden begins to comprehend.

*Climax of Action:* Snow drinks poison; he dies. The villagers rush him off to the doctor's. The boy and Malden are alone with Yen Sin. Malden runs to fetch his wife and child. Yen Sin sends the boy for the minister. Yen Sin's departure, "China way," and Malden's prayer for his soul.

Study the interval of time between every two

stages of the action. Observe the quickening of tempo near the close, added to a cumulative weightiness of effect.

**THEME.** The story is thought-provoking in its bigness of theme which every reader will express for himself. Many will see no further than the concrete events. Others may be tempted, perhaps, to read more into the story than the author consciously included. But it seems to be clear that the end of the struggle is in the yellow man's favor. The closing sentence emphasizes the irony of mission work.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Is the boy's angle uniform in regard to his apprehension and comprehension at the age of thirteen? Does he occasionally seem older? younger?

What attributes of the Minister invite your sympathy? How are his qualities given—through the boy, or through his report of acts and speeches?

At what point do you begin to watch for trickery on Mate Snow's part? What is his dominant trait?

What trait of the Chinaman is exploited? Is it racial or individual?

**SETTING.** Point out links that connect the locale of this story with that of "Down on their Knees." Notice that the chief scene-settings are: the Chinaman's scow, the church, the home of Sympathy Gibbs. Why is the drug-store residence of Minister Malden not used? Why not the transactions at Infield? Give two reasons, one with regard to unity, the other with regard to handling of plot.

Is there reason that the action might have strayed over too much time and place for the purpose of the short-story? Could a novelette be constructed out of the material included?

**DETAILS.** By what early preparation does the death of Snow from *poison* become so logical as scarce to challenge question? (See page 442.)

"Tubbed box trees," "the big green door," "lilac

panes," "silhouetted against the open door," "a steam-blurred silhouette," "shadows of the uneasy flock moved across the windows,"—these illustrate what ability of the author? Point out other examples.

Page 447—"If—if one had faith!" To what dénouement is this a clue?

Page 448—"He's gone out in the back-country to pray alone." Clue to what? Do you think it credible that Mate Snow never suspected where Malden went on these occasions? If he knew, what motive kept him silent? Where did Mate Snow suppose the Minister got the hush-money?

Page 449—"The door was still open, a blank, bright rectangle giving into the deserted vestry, and it was against this mat of light that I spied Minister Malden's head," etc. What processes work to make this a memorable bit of description. Point out similar examples in this story and in the other stories of Mr. Steele. Point out examples in stories by other authors.

Study Mr. Steele's use of shadows, here and in "The Yellow Cat." Compare them with Mr. Dobie's shadows in "Laughter." The value of shadows lies in their suggestion. They call up the real thing in fiction more easily and economically than the thing itself, as described, can do. The reason is obvious. If there is a shadow, the reader knows, unconsciously, there must be something to cast it. Hence, curiosity may be aroused; in any event, "belief" is secured in the reality of the object.

"Approaching . . . I put one large, round eye to the aperture." (Page 455.) Did the boy think of himself as having a "large round eye"? Or does the narrator think of himself (now a man of years) as he looked? Is it sound technique, either way regarded, or would it be better to leave out the "large, round"?

Is it more fascinating to read of something viewed in part and surreptitiously than it is to read of the same

scene viewed as a whole and freely under usual conditions? What primitive impulses are appealed to?

Page 457, in the paragraph beginning, "I shall never forget the picture," occurs preparation for the "China way" departure. What is it? In the same paragraph what excellent bit of description occurs?

What do you think of the idea "—the emotion of humor, which is another name for perception"? (Page 458.)

Page 459, in the paragraph beginning, "Yes," he murmured, is an excellent example of irony. How does it aid the action?

Do you believe that in the struggle of wills Mate Snow would have given in to the urge of the Chinaman? What circumstances argue for the result? What is against it?

Page 465. Do not fail to take the full meaning of the paragraph to heart: "He lay so still over there on the couch." In what lines is the thought most poignant?

Page 467. Why is the expression "Urkey's unwashed collars" used with fine effect?

What satisfaction do you find in the closing tableau?

## THE DARK HOUR

"The Dark Hour" has, in the story sense, no plot. The only action lies in a fragmentary discussion between the sick man, Hallett, and his physician who paces the deck of the homeward bound vessel. The only hint of a struggle lies in the conflicting viewpoints of the two men.

Hallett holds that Germany has a vision—"a red, bloody, damned vision"—but a vision. The Allies have, as yet, no vision.

The doctor argues that the Allies *want to win the war*.

Hallett replies that this desire is nightmare.—"The only thing to beat a vision black as midnight is a vision white as the noonday sun." He eventually gives the possible vision,—symbolized earlier by his words, "There's a bright star, doctor,"—in the thin-worn word, "Democracy." He declares that such an impossible Utopia must come—or "Hamburg to Bagdad." As the doctor declares that this wild empire of the spirit is impossible and Hallett agrees, cryptically, that it *is* impossible, the watch cries "All's well." Hallett then says we may do the impossible, after all; in all the world is nothing but the sound of the barricades of revolution. He sees the star, as he has seen it in the beginning of the dialogue.

The argument thus becomes an optimistic prophecy of the final vision of the Allies. At Thanksgiving, 1918, the impossible seems about to be realized: Hallett was essentially right, in his point of view.

The sick man, one who probably dying is assumedly close to the spirit-world, is well-balanced by the material physician, representing the earth-spirit.

Besides suggesting a nexus between America and the fighting Allies, the homeward bound vessel affords from



its deck, quite naturally, the view of the star, which becomes symbolically useful; and, further, the cry of the watch, "All's well," which also conveys a deeper meaning.

The story should be read as the counterpart of Virgil Jordan's "Vengeance is Mine." (See page 119.)

## THE BIRD OF SERBIA

**STARTING POINT.** In "The Bird of Serbia," Mr. Street desired to say through the medium of fiction a certain thing. "Perhaps I wanted to say: 'Nothing is so small or so nasty that it can not be made to serve an autocratic ruler in carrying out his designs.' So, then, I took as my symbol for smallness and nastiness, the louse. And then I set out to prove that lice could serve the autocrat who wished to start a war. I wanted to show how very true that theory is, and I should say that the quality of truth in that story — the convincingness of it — is the best thing about it."—*Julian Street.*

### **PLOT.**

*Initial Impulses*, giving rise to the struggle and the complication.—

Gavrilo Prinzip, a subject of Austro-Hungary, living in Sarajevo, Bosnia, is a Serb by descent and nature. The revolutionary spirit he displays at an early age gives evidence of his passionate racial feeling. In 1913, at the age of eighteen, he is betrothed to Mara. The two are devoted to each other, but Mara resents Gavrilo's constant ideal of a free Serb race. She is, perhaps, "jealous of a people."

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* Sarajevo plans to have on June 28, Kossovo Day, a celebration greater than usual because of Serbian independence gained in the two preceding years of the Balkan War. A few days before, Mara's relative, a former supposed rival of Gavrilo, gives her a black song bird—a *kos*. Gavrilo begs her to release the bird. She feels that she will be giving up

her own character to free it, and persists in keeping it caged. She is confirmed in her stubbornness through the advice of her relative. The Serbian festival is forbidden; attempts to commemorate the anniversary will result in arrest. Austrian manoeuvres will take place, instead. The Archduke will appear, in spite of advice to the contrary. It is clear that a plot is brewing. Gavrilo has promised, however, not to participate in anything violent so long as Mara loves him. She assures him of her love, whereupon he asks her again, to set the *kos* free.

*Minor Climax:* She refuses. The *kos* has become a symbol for both. Mara in releasing it would surrender her will power; Gavrilo releasing it would see an emblem of freedom for all Serbs.

Gavrilo engages in the plot, but remembering his promise he refuses to "participate in certain matters." He and Mara are happy so long as the bird is not mentioned. When he puts leaves into the cage, however, Mara begs him not to do so; she fears they are poisonous, as the bird is growing weaker. Gavrilo insists that captivity is killing it.

*Dramatic Climax:* On the evening of June 27, the bird dies. "It was not a dead bird that I saw, but a climax in a parable."

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* Gavrilo and Mara, filled with emotion, dispute over the cause of death. Mara insists that the bird man must determine the cause, and affects to believe that Gavrilo has poisoned it. He runs from the garden, frantic. The bird man comes; he points out the lice. Mara sends for Gavrilo. He cannot be found. The Archduke, his wife, and their suite arrive.

*Climax of Action:* On the morning of June 28, Gavrilo shoots the Archduke and the Archduchess as they ride through the streets of Sarajevo.

*Dénouement:* Gavrilo dies, four years later, in prison.

The struggle, then, is one of wills — Gavriilo's against Mara's. The two lines of interest forming the complication are 1st, the love story of Gavriilo and Mara; 2nd, the relations between Serbians and Austria. This complication begins with the initial impulse of the story and finds its solution only with the climax of action.

Examples of good craftsmanship in details are 1st, making Gavriilo a good shot, and at the same time introducing the bird *motif*; 2nd, strengthening Mara's will and antagonizing Gavriilo by the cousin, who is introduced with the first mention of Gavriilo's love affair. Point out other instances of plot finish.

PRESENTATION. The story, as told by a man in a smoking-car, is immediately and logically motivated by the newspaper account of Gavriilo Prinzip's death. The dénouement, therefore, is presented first, though it appears from the conclusion that the narrator's fellow-travelers do not recognize this fact until the series of events comes full circle.

In connection with the plot, notice how the narrator is bound up with it. What advantages do you find in the author's presenting the story in the rehearsed, rather than in the dramatic way? "In order to show what I was driving at," says Mr. Street, "it was necessary for me to use the form of the inner, related story — a form which is always awkward, but which sometimes succeeds in spite of its awkwardness, for the reason that the reader becomes so absorbed in the inner story that he forgets that an individual is supposed to be speaking, and that, too often, that individual is talking like a book, rather than a human being, let alone an easy raconteur.

"My story, 'The Bird of Serbia,' is not without this fault. The man who sits in the smoking-room of a Pullman car and relates the inner tale, would not, in actual life, have spoken altogether as I made him speak. To that extent, then, the story is imperfect; but this imperfection is not likely to be noticed by the average reader, because it is not sufficiently glaring to remind him that

the man in the smoking-room is supposed to be talking all the while."

CHARACTERIZATION. What traits in the chief actors are most conspicuous? Are they "played up" convincingly and economically? What value have the background characters — the mother of Gavriilo, for example? What points of the Austrian character are noted, because of which sympathy is diverted from the Archduke?

Is the narrator of Gavriilo's story, the man in the smoking car, a minor character or a disinterested chronicler of the events he followed so minutely and accurately?

SETTING. Notice that Mr. Street restrains his narrator from *stating* the name of the place, Sarajevo, until near the conclusion. Does its reserve increase the final effect? What details indicate the author's familiarity with local conditions, customs, dress, and language? To what end do these local color data contribute?

DETAILS. What clue do you find in the narrator's statement about the "microscopic unclean forces of which historians will never know"?

Do you regard the ending as one of "surprise"? If so, is it calculated as such, or rather a chance offshoot of what was intended, rather, as a strong closing sentence?

On the subject of story writing in general, Mr. Street makes a valuable observation:

"It seems to me that there is a tendency, in discussing the art of short story writing, to confuse manner and matter, and to conclude that the story with a big, sombre theme must necessarily be superior, as a work of art, to the story which is lighter in subject and treatment. When I say 'light' I do not mean frivolous or false. De Maupassant, Leonard Merrick, and O. Henry have taught us better than that. A story can have the quality of truth, and can be rich in character and observation, yet be done with splendid deftness of touch — and oftentimes this very deftness, which we so seldom see in a story, is regarded too lightly by critics. It is much as though we were to insist that the wood-chopper has

greater skill than the tight-rope walker, valuing the heavy strokes of the one more highly than the poise and adeptness of the other. A light touch in a story often suggests that it has been produced with ease; and a light step on the tight-rope suggests the same thing; but when we see a man swinging a heavy axe at a huge tree trunk, breathing hard and sweating, we readily perceive that he is doing real work. Hard work. I do not dispute that there may be certain lumber-jacks who handle the two-edged axe with a practiced skill rivaling or, perhaps, even surpassing the skill of a fair tight-rope walker; but neither do I hold with those who see art only where there is sweat and smell and swearing."

## THE BOUNTY JUMPER

**OPENING SITUATION.** James Thorold, of Chicago, has just been appointed ambassador to Forsland. Isador Framberg has fallen at Vera Cruz. Thorold is making his way to the station to meet his son, Peter, who comes on the same train that brings the body of Framberg.

The *initial incident*, then, of the complete story is the meeting of father and son.

*Brief steps in action.*—The two pay their respects to Framberg's remains, at City Hall. This becomes the *motivation* for the story Thorold tells his son and for his giving up the appointment. (See final paragraph.)

### PLOT OF INNER STORY.

*Initial Incidents:* Thorold had taken "bounty money," which was offered to any one who joined the Nineteenth Regiment at a specified time.

*Dramatic Climax:* "I slipped past the lines." . . .  
"I was a bounty-jumper."

*Climax of Action:* Thorold's promise to God and to Lincoln that he would atone for the faith he had broken.

*Dénouement* (of enveloping action as aided by inner narrative):

Thorold relinquishes the Forsland Embassy. This act, joined to the confession, forms the expiation. In one sense, the whole rehearsed story may be said to constitute the *dénouement* of Thorold's life-long struggle.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Thorold is the chief figure, emphasized from beginning to end by the author's comment,

## 208 HOW TO STUDY BEST SHORT STORIES

by his own recollections, by his son's remarks to him, and by his own confession. The *struggle* is Thorold's. What aspects has it?

The second figure is Framberg — dead. He is the *cause* of the immediate phase of the long struggle, the climactic phase. He is the contrasting element, the heroic young man, even an alien by birth, who was nevertheless a better American than Thorold. (Notice the information given, page 262, about his foreign birth.) Through whom does the reader get most of the information about Isador?

The third figure is Peter, a foil of another sort for his father. He is the judge. "Our children are always our ultimate judges"—page 268. Is Peter, at any point, inconsistent with your concept of a sixteen year old boy? How do you account for the fact, with respect to authorship and artistic purpose of the author? Are his personality and influence, joined to that of Framberg's, strong enough for the motivating force? That is, would Thorold have told his story? Would he have given up the ambassadorship?

**SETTING, ETC.** The narrator brings together in an apparently easy yet powerful way in a tempo suited to the happenings in real life the forces of half a century. (Compare with this management that in "The Waiting Years.") The action occurs within a single morning. Chicago is kept before the reader by numerous references. The magnitude of the narrative is increased by the spirit of Lincoln; the poignancy of sentiment by the lilac fragrance, the picture of the hearse, the reminiscence of the dead Lincoln.

**PRESENTATION.** How consistently does the author keep to the mind of Thorold in exercising her power of omniscience? When she shifts to the boy's mind, do you feel a break in the unity? What alleviating circumstances help to preserve the unity?

**ATMOSPHERE.** The tone is restrained, sad from the inner failure of the man who has known worldly success;



yet it is hopeful in the spiritual outcome of the struggle and in the promise of the young boy Peter. Is it character or setting which, in this story, contributes most to atmosphere?

## NONE SO BLIND

**CLASSIFICATION.** A story of situation, suggesting numerous small struggles. (See below.) It is a remarkable example of the *multum in parvo* management required of the short-story. The action requires a brief part of one day.

**PLOT.** The *impulse* of the action lies in the telephone message announcing Bessie Lowe's death.

The *dramatic climax* is in Dick's perjury: his declaration that Bessie Lowe was the girl *he* had cared for.

The *climax of action* lies in the narrator's discovery that Standish — not Dick — had been Bessie's lover.

The *dénouement* is the narrator's "poisoned arrow" flash of light that Dick had loved Leila and had sacrificed his own fiancée to the hurt to save Leila's feelings. With the recognition dawns the realization that she and Dick must go their ways.

Struggle moments suggested are: 1. In the heart of Standish. Shall he confess to his wife? 2. In the heart of Dick. Shall he sacrifice his fiancée to save Leila's feelings? 3. On Leila's part. Shall she indicate that she knows Dick is lying? 4. On the part of the narrator. What shall she do about it? In each case, the outcome arrives with celerity, and love is the ruling motive in each struggle. The decision, as affected by love, testifies to the character of each person.

**CHARACTERIZATION.** Is each character so described, and does he show such action and interaction as to make logical the behavior in the particular struggle? Must the reader accept any one of the decisions on faith alone?

**SETTING.** What is it? Has it particular contributory value, or might the locale have been, say, New York?

How is it integrated with atmosphere and action? (See, e.g., page 468, "Through the purpling twilight of that St. John's eve.")

DETAILS. How might the narrator have hoodwinked herself as to Dick's motive? How might Dick have explained so as either 1. to satisfy the narrator, or 2. to leave her — and the reader — in doubt? Which of the three choices would have been cheapest and easiest? Which would have destroyed, altogether, the individuality of the story?

Study the sound effects, beginning in the very first paragraph. Is there a suggestion of disturbed harmonies, in a spiritual sense? Notice that the sounds suggest the entire London background against which the individual tragedy stands out, etched in a few lines.

What value have the poetic passages which Miss Synon is fond of introducing into her stories? Do they seem to be external, or have they been made an essentially vital part of the whole?

What does lavender, at the close, signify?

Wherein lies the deepest pathos of the story? How is it conveyed — by notice or neglect or by a happy restraint?

## HALF-PAST TEN

**CLASSIFICATION.** As a short-story of situation, this narrative achieves that concentration found in Barrie's "Half Hour" Plays. It may be studied as all the preceding examples have been studied, but attention is called to

**SKILL IN PRESENTATION.**

1. In the suspense, (a) the reader senses a tragedy, but has not all the details until the end of the first seven or eight hundred words, (b) the reader waits the news of Jim's death.

2. In the new rise of interest after Al's announcement, "All over."

3. In depicting the characters almost wholly through acts and speeches.

4. In satisfying the reader. Jim died for a crime committed by another, but he seems to have deserved death on general principles. Again, the surviving family have the poor knowledge and consolation that he was immediately innocent.

5. In the objective method (already suggested under 3) which conveys directly the grim tragedy and sordid realism.

A slip in the method is found in the fact that the mind of the child is invaded once or twice. It would seem that at the beginning the author meant to present the whole tragedy from the point of view of Rhoda, who would not comprehend it all, of course, and would therefore serve a purpose similar to that of the thirteen year old boy in "Ching, Ching, Chinaman." But either the task proved too difficult, or the author changed her purpose,

without the revision which would have given perfection to the method. (See, *e.g.*, page 349, "Rhoda took stock of them. . . ." This illustrates her "angle" or the author's exercise of omniscience over her baby mentality.)

## 'AT ISHAM'S

Setting and idea overbalance plot and characterization in this story, which hardly concerns itself with narrative form. True, it supports — rather than is supported by — an embryonic plot; and, true, the plot is marked by a struggle element in the guise of antagonism between two men. But the author is interested in his question and in the debate.

The starting point of the argument is this query, propounded by Norvel, at Isham's restaurant: "If Mars is inhabited by a race so similar to ourselves, what means of communication between us is there so unmistakably of *human origin* that a sight of it or a sound from it would unmistakably convince them of our relationship?"

As suggestion after suggestion is dismissed, it seems to be clear that nature can imitate everything. Then Savelle declares that man can only imitate nature. Philbin retorts: "That's contrary to every teaching of Christ you ever raved about." Philbin goes away. Savelle continues to maintain that all that is human is imitation.

Then comes the great war. Philbin returns to Isham's after five years, in the second of the world conflict. Depressed, old, and distraught, he announces that he has lost his son. He produces the bronze cross, bestowed upon his son for saving the lives of two fishmongers. Young Philbin was going back for the third when he was killed.

Norvel asks what part of nature Mr. Philbin was then imitating.

Savelle affirms, "It is the divine phenomenon of Calvary." But Philbin replies, "When my son was alive, he was a man. I believe he, too, died like a man. I prefer that to an imitation of anything — even God."

There is, then, no outcome; for the conclusion but emphasizes, further, the two separate views. A larger truth is conveyed, however, which as if incidentally usurps the end to which the story seems headed. It is this: Sacrifice of life for a weaker brother is either God-like or manlike. With this dawning thesis in mind, the reader recognizes that Mr. Venable has answered emphatically the question set up in such stories as "Greater Love —" and "The Knight's Move." (See page 75.)

Are the views of Philbin and Savelle, in the end, the same each held at the beginning?

## DE VILMARTE'S LUCK

### PLOT.

#### *Circumstances Antecedent to the Main Action:*

Hazelton, who cannot sell his "blond" canvasses, paints "La Guigne Noire," a study in dark. He is immediately approved by the public. After three years he has ceased exposing pictures of his earlier and better manner.

*Initial Incident:* While he is engaged on "Le Mal du Ventre," he meets Raoul de Vilmarthe, an inferior artist but gentleman of means. The latter admires the former work, and insists that Hazelton should claim his position as the apostle of light. Hazelton suggests that another signature might bring recognition. De Vilmarthe lightly offers his name.

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* He signs a Hazelton picture, which is immediately accepted and acclaimed. The two artists decide to keep the secret, as the best way out of what has become an awkward situation. Hazelton decides to go on with his "darker" method. Some months later the two men make another bargain — De Vilmarthe buys a painting of Hazelton. The traffic continues, whenever De Vilmarthe needs a picture or Hazelton needs money. (Notice the motivation for the needs.) Hazelton, having transferred his affection to his second manner, feels a mad sense of rivalry. On the occasion of the next exhibition De Vilmarthe wins the second medal. Hazelton has only one picture on the line. Raoul is sorry; Hazelton says the thing must stop. But now De Vilmarthe's mother urges a private exhibition. Hazelton bargains



once more, but with the statement that one of the four must die — he, his wife, De Vilmarte, or De Vilmarte's mother.—"There is death in our little drama." De Vilmarte falls in love; his agony increases. Hazelton paints an unusually fine picture. Raoul signs it but declares that it is the end; he has defiled himself too long.

*Dramatic Climax:* The supposed artist receives the Legion of Honor. Mme. de Vilmarte comments on the resemblance between her son's "work" and Hazelton's, "as though you were two halves of a whole, a day and night." Hazelton gives up his thought of exposing De Vilmarte.

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* The struggle continues; Hazelton, at intervals, threatens De Vilmarte; the latter plans to kill Hazelton, then himself. But he decides to wait until his mother dies. Affairs have reached this state when war breaks out, and France claims both artists. Hazelton writes to Raoul that he must not fear for his mother, if he comes to harm. Both are engaged for some time in fighting.

*Climax of Action:* Wounded, they meet in a hospital. Hazelton learns that De Vilmarte's right hand is injured; he dies in an ironic burst of laughter that Raoul's luck holds to the end.

The details of plot are presented chronologically, from the omniscient author's point of view. Do you see any value in the author's exercising omniscience over the mind of first one character then the other? Would the story gain if she had invaded only Raoul's mind? Hazelton's?

CHARACTERS. In Hazelton, the dominant character, Mrs. Vorse presents an interesting study of dual personality. She gains the reader's sympathy for him chiefly by showing that his better nature, as revealed in his "first manner," lacked appreciation from the artistic

world. He was, in a measure, forced to rely upon his "second" or "darker" manner. In this respect the narrative offers a novel divergence from other stories of the type. At the same time, the contrasting features in the man's physical appearance, in his craftsmanship, and in his behavior toward De Vilmarte testify to the indubitable presence of light and shade in his intrinsic make-up.

De Vilmarte is only a foil, but sufficiently vitalized to share, proportionately, the reader's interest.

SETTING. Nowhere except in France could the development of events be so easily compassed. From the salon of the beginning to the hospital at the close, the setting is an integral part of the story.

## THE WHITE BATTALION

STARTING POINT. "It was in those intolerable days of 1917 when Russia had fallen away and America seemed perilously unready; when German intrigue helped by treachery behind the allied lines in France, England and Italy was winning the war for Germany; intolerable to those of soldier blood whose years put them beyond the dead line of enlistment requirements and who could do nothing more than work and earn and give over here.

I was haunted interminably by the suffering of the women of France whose men had died on the field of honor — wasted suffering if, in the end, the German won. I knew the women would fight against any — is there a stronger adjective of horror now than *Germanic* odds? How could these widowed women, or even the dead bear it — and in a flash "The White Battalion" came.

Always the supernatural stories "flash" in this way, apparently in answer to a long sub-conscious demand for justice beyond human power to compass. Other stories build more or less painfully, save for the big scene."—  
*Frances Gilchrist Wood.*

### PLOT.

*Initial Impulse:* Widows of certain heroic Frenchmen, petitioning to be entered and drilled as the —nth Battalion of Avengers, are accepted and trained.

*Steps toward the Dramatic Climax:* Each woman adds a packet of potassium cyanide to her equipment. They request, further, to be assigned to the position which will be in the course of advance to retake the ground held to the death by their men. Major Fouquet commands them. Order comes for

the attack, and they go over the top, eagerly, gripping their bayonets as they follow the barrage across No Man's Land. When the barrage lifts the women see "thrust shield-wise above the heads of the Huns — frightened and sobbing — hundreds of little children!" (This is a minor climax.) The women recognize they must either betray a trust or cut through the barricade of children. After an instant only the woman captain makes the sign of the cross and stumbles forward — on her wrist bound the packet of death! They will charge, her followers understand, but the poison will erase the hideous memory forever. The captain falls. . . .

*Dramatic Climax:* As the women grip to thrust, there sweeps down a battalion of marching shadows in a blur of gold and blue that outstrips the advance of the Avengers. There is a flash of charging steel and the waving colors of the old —nth as they sweep over the untouched children into the trench.

*Steps toward the Climax of Action:* The bravest man in the old —nth bends over the fallen captain; there is a smile of recognition, then the woman's figure springs to his side and sweeps forward with the Battalion.

*Climax of Action:* The old soldiers of the —nth, led by "a shining one," save their women from the "last hellish trap set by fiends"! The Avengers and the White Battalion retake the ground for which the —nth gave their lives.

*Dénouement:* Fouquet and Barres, having seen the field from different angles, report the episode.

**PRESENTATION.** The rehearsal of this dramatic occurrence, so shortly after the event, scarcely detracts from its stirring qualities. So striking are they, in fact, that presented directly they would probably suffer from over-emphasis and consequent lack of conviction. Moreover, reality is conveyed through